SEPTEMBER 1/8, 2003

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The Nation.

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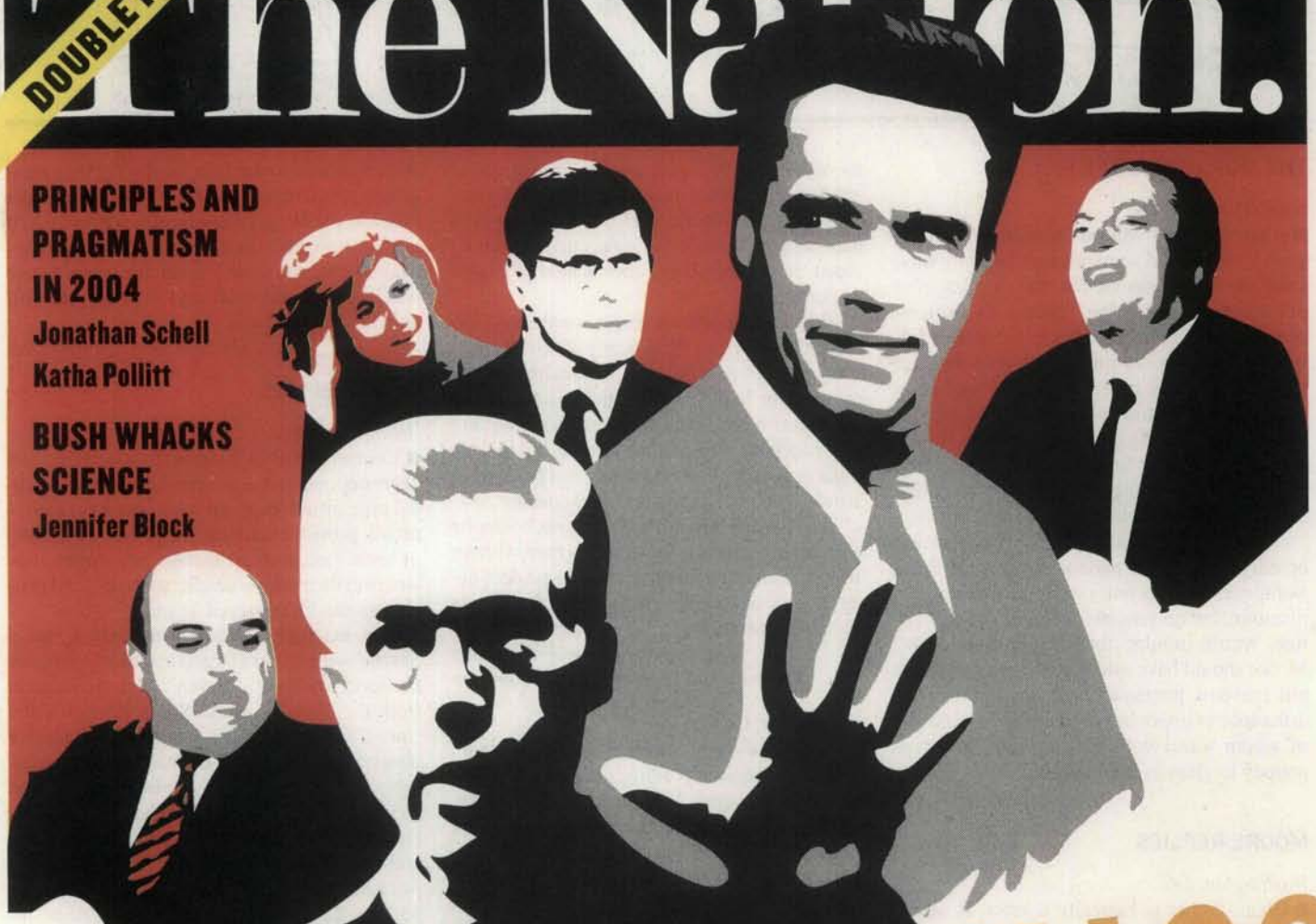

CALIFORNIA CHAOS

A POLITICAL EPIC WITH A CAST OF THOUSANDS

by PETER SCHRAG

CRUZ BUSTAMANTE • ARIANNA HUFFINGTON • GRAY DAVIS • BILL SIMON • ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER • LARRY FLYNT

AND GARY COLEMAN AS HIMSELF

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THE MORNING-AFTER PILL

South Portland, Me.

■ Kirsten Moore ["Missed Conception," July 14] goes well beyond semantics and simply misstates the facts in saying that "the morning-after pill prevents conception." It does its work by producing hormonal changes in the uterine lining that prevent the implantation of any ova that may already be fertilized, or may soon become so. Abortion, as defined medically, is the termination of a pregnancy, which is only brought about by implantation. Considered literally, the morning-after pill can be called neither an abortifacient nor a contraceptive.

Contraception has been sensibly understood broadly in common parlance to include those techniques that prevent pregnancy but not fertilization, but no sensible definition of conception would render fertilization irrelevant. Moore should have said that the morning-after pill prevents pregnancy, not conception. The difference is important to many people, not all of whom travel with the far right. It serves nobody to gloss over this distinction.

GLENN PICHER

MOORE REPLIES

Washington, DC

■ Glenn Picher is basically correct. It would have been more accurate to say that emergency contraception prevents "pregnancy," given the current limits of our scientific knowledge. But he is wrong in the particulars. While the precise mechanism of EC is not known for every individual woman, delay or prevention of ovulation—and therefore prevention of fertilization—is the only well-documented mechanism. And since EC works before a pregnancy is established, it is indeed categorized by the US Food and Drug Administration as a contraceptive. Mifepristone, on the other hand, more commonly known as RU-486, interrupts an established pregnancy and is categorized as an abortifacient. KIRSTEN MOORE

TEAMSTERS & HEALTHCARE

Washington, DC

■ Steve Early's "Labor's Health Problem" [July 7], on the challenges unions face in addressing healthcare, conveniently leaves out labor's most recent successes. But of course, Early would never give the Teamsters Union credit where credit is due.

In the past year, Jim Hoffa and the Teamsters Union have negotiated three national contracts—United Parcel Service, Freight and Carhaul. The UPS contract, the largest pact negotiated in the United States last year, covers more than 200,000 workers. The Freight agreement, ratified earlier this year by a record 86 percent, covers more than 65,000 workers. And the Carhaul contract, which is currently being voted on by members, covers nearly 10,000 workers.

Why is each of these major contracts so important? Not one of these nearly 300,000 Teamsters will spend one dime on healthcare copays. As the battle over healthcare costs rages, Teamsters negotiators won contracts that not only provide a zero cost for workers but include wage increases, improved safety and health provisions and other dramatic improvements.

It is hard to fathom how an article can be written on the challenges unions face without also mentioning the victories. Your readers deserve some context on what is occurring across the labor movement. BRET CALDWELL

Director of communications
International Brotherhood of Teamsters

New Haven, Conn.

■ Steve Early's "Labor's Health Problem" should be required reading for all union leaders and negotiators. When he writes, "Engaging this broader public during benefit disputes requires a candid admission by labor that today's healthcare crisis can't be settled at the bargaining table," Early pushes union leadership to discuss with their membership honestly the limits of our power when we represent only 13 percent of the labor force. He also challenges us to take advantage of the "teachable moment" to engage both union and not-yet-union workers about the opportunity to work toward a future of increased medical security. Far too many local union leaders can't see beyond their ever-shrinking base; international union leadership, rank-and-file membership and healthcare activists need to insist that circling a smaller and smaller number of wagons is not a viable strategy. Maybe the best work we can all do in preparation for the 2004 presidential election is to incite a wave of working-family-to-working-family discussions about healthcare security. PAUL WESSEL, *member*
AFSCME Local 3144

Rockford, Mich.

■ Here in Rockford, the UAW is striking against Hamilton Sundstrand (actually, locked out by management) over health benefits for retirees. I find it unfortunate that anyone in our nation has to fight for this basic right. I lived in Japan for two years, benefiting greatly from a nationalized health insurance program. I never had a long wait and enjoyed more choice than I have ever experienced, before or since. My husband's Canadian relatives express greater satisfaction with their healthcare than we do. Perhaps most telling, Americans on the Canadian border take bus trips to get pharmaceuticals from their northern neighbor. I can only hope that the propaganda that "socialized" medicine is ineffective will lose out to the truth, and all Americans will gain health insurance.

LORI DRUMMOND-CHERNIWCHAN

EARLY REPLIES

Arlington, Mass.

■ Contrary to Bret Caldwell's assertion, few Teamsters are immune from the effects of medical cost inflation. Even when contract settlements preserve existing employer financing of healthcare, workers usually pay a price elsewhere in their wage-benefit package—and pensioners can be squeezed as well.

For example, Teamsters at United Parcel Service—the world's largest and most profitable transport company—haven't had an increase from the union's Central States Pension Fund since 1997. They're not scheduled for another benefit hike until 2008 because employer contributions that might otherwise have boosted pensions are being diverted to the Central States Health and Welfare Fund, which insures active and retired members. Nevertheless, the latter just had their medical co-payments raised from $50 to $200 per month—with further increases likely.

There is a growing grassroots movement among beneficiaries of the Central States Funds to protest both this pension freeze and increased retiree healthcare costs. But, as Paul Wessel and Lori Drummond-Cherniwchan suggest, the only long-term solution is "a nationalized health insurance program."

One of the first acts of President Ron Carey's administration in 1992 was to commit the Teamsters to work for such a single-payer system. The union's current leadership would do well to dust off that resolution and rejoin the movement for real healthcare reform.

STEVE EARLY

PUMP UP THE VOLUME

West Chester, Ohio

■ While Eric Alterman is certainly right in his characterization of the conservative dominance of the media, and hence the framing of any debate ["Stop the Presses," July 14], he does leave out some bright spots on the horizon regarding the left and talk-radio. Anyone with Internet access can tune in to America Radio, and hear good, progressive talk-radio, some of which has as much bite as Rush and Hannity. Further, you can contact the programming manager at

(Continued on Page 31)

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EDITORIALS

California Scheming

California has often spun the cautionary tales of American progress. Smog. Sprawl. Ronald Reagan. But this summer's California horror story is particularly sobering, as it could signal the darkest turn for democracy since the Supreme Court made George W. Bush President. Thwarted repeatedly in their efforts to win statewide contests the old-fashioned way—with votes cast on Election Day—California conservatives decided to buy themselves a different sort of election. When a relatively sincere, if misguided, grassroots drive to recall Governor Gray Davis failed, GOP Congressman and car-alarm millionaire Darrell Issa bankrolled the collection of 1.7 million signatures, enough to make Davis the first governor to face a recall election since North Dakota's Lynn Frazier in 1921.

The carnivalesque contest that has ensued, with celebrity candidates, consultants-gone-wild price tags and two separate ballots—chronicled by Peter Schrag on page 13 of this issue—has obscured the fact that what is happening in California represents a gross abuse of the democratic process. Created as a progressive reform by California Governor Hiram Johnson in the early twentieth century, the recall option was intended for use only in extraordinary circumstances—convictions, corruptions, infirmities and insanities. Even Davis's harshest critics cannot explain why the state's $38 billion budget shortfall justifies his removal when the President, who is running far more serious deficits at the federal level and whose reckless policies have helped create California's fiscal crisis, gets credit as a "fiscal conservative." Don't expect to see Bush campaigning for a Golden State Republican as the recall approaches; his political team won't let him anywhere near a discussion of deficits, and they fear getting mixed up in the fight between GOP moderates, who prefer actor Arnold Schwarzenegger, and conservatives, who are aghast at Schwarzenegger's support for gay rights and abortion rights. That said, Karl Rove won't be complaining as the California campaign draws attention and dollars away from Democratic contenders in 2004. And Rove certainly wouldn't mind having a telegenic Republican governor promoting the Bush-Cheney ticket in the nation's most populous state (although GOP strategists rightly worry about inheriting the same fiscal mess that plagued Davis).

How the majority of California voters who are not Republicans—not to mention national Democrats and their allies in the labor movement—handle the bad cards they've been dealt will decide whether this cautionary tale has a happy, or at least tolerable, ending. The first step is to vote no on the recall of Davis. The point is not to reward the governor but to send a message that the recall should not be abused, in California or in the seventeen other states where it is an option. But Davis's low approval ratings require a measure of realism. Even if Davis loses, those who bought the election need not necessarily win. While it appears unlikely that a progressive populist like columnist Arianna Huffington will ride to victory, it is reasonable to believe that an acceptable Democrat—especially one who appeals to the state's burgeoning Latino electorate, like Lieutenant Governor Cruz Bustamante, the only candidate other than Schwarzenegger polling in double digits—could terminate the Terminator in second-round voting. If the schemers are not stopped in the first round, they must be blocked in the second. But only a resounding rejection of the recall itself would show the cynics that gaming the system doesn't pay.

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COMMENT

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Marriage of Convenience

What's driving the new twin offensives against gay marriage announced by George Bush and the Pope? A reactionary wedding of morality and politics, naturally.

Bush cloaked his decision to jump on the antigay marriage bandwagon in "we're all sinners" biblical rhetoric, a ploy that even seduced the *New York Times*, which obtusely praised the President for a "careful attempt to brush back...bigotry." In fact, Bush's choice to exploit gay marriage was motivated by crass electoral calculations. First, distract voters from more pressing issues that have eroded his support in the polls. Second, throw red meat to energize his Christian-right base—Karl Rove has complained publicly that 4 million of the 19 million evangelical Christians didn't vote in the last national election. Third, surf on the antigay backlash against the Supreme Court's sodomy decision: A Gallup poll two days before Bush unexpectedly pounced on gays showed that support for same-sex civil unions dropped to just 40 percent, the lowest level in three years—and support for making gay sex legal plummeted from 60 to 48 percent.

America perceives itself through television's eye, and the new gay media visibility has fed the backlash. On TV gays are still, with a few exceptions, subjected to a "gauntlet of humiliation," as a *San Francisco Chronicle* analysis recently put it. The one-dimensional, fashion-and-sex-enthralled, stereotypical inhabitants of *Queer as Folk*, *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*, *Boy Meets Boy* and other much-hyped niche programming raise hackles in the heartland. So does all-news TV's obsessive coverage of gay US couples flocking to Canada or Vermont to marry or unite civilly and the crisis in the Anglican church over the ordination of gay bishops. Even the use of same-sex couples in advertising by mainstream companies like Volvo has contributed to the media's much-touted "gaying" of America.

The United States is the most religious of any industrialized democracy, and at a time of economic uncertainty and security hysteria, the railings of the Christian right against the cultural "chaos" of gay marriage offer up gays to the frustrated and fearful as a convenient target, especially to the undereducated and underemployed, who see upwardly mobile consumerist gays on TV enjoying advantages beyond their reach. Resentment combined with religiosity is why 54 percent of Hispanics oppose gay marriage while only 40 percent support it, and among African-Americans there is a whopping 65-28 percent split, according to a July Pew poll.

Every civil rights movement encounters reaction the closer it gets to success—remember the 1960s "white backlash" against the "uppity" blacks, which Richard Nixon and George Wallace exploited to electoral advantage? Well, us "uppity" queers are now getting a dose of the same from those who find change unsettling. Bush's strategists know all this—and how to use it. The anti–gay marriage offensive is their way of coagulating the unease about ever-more-visible homosexuality into manipulable form.

As for the Pope, Wojtyla's order that Catholic politicians must oppose not just marriage between same-sex couples but any legal recognition of their unions is primarily a last-ditch attempt to

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create a political firewall against the emerging new reality in Western democracies. First country to marry gay couples: the Netherlands in 2001, followed not long after by Belgium. Germany now accords all the legal rights that married heterosexual couples have to their gay counterparts (except in Catholic Bavaria), and numerous city halls have been host to gay "weddings."

Denmark (in 1989), Norway (1993) and Sweden (1995) have given full legal equality to gay couples, and these Scandinavian countries have a tripartite pact insuring cross-border recognition of those couples' rights. France adopted its PACS (pact of civil solidarity) for gay couples in 1998, Hungary (in 1995) and Portugal (in 2001) recognized gay civil unions, and this July Croatia put unmarried gay and hetero couples on an equal legal footing. Gay civil unions are recognized by a number of Spanish provinces, by the cantons of Zurich and Geneva in Switzerland, and by some Italian cities, like Florence. A majority of Italians—51.6 percent—even favor gay marriage, according to a poll released in June (which also found that 49.2 percent of Italians consider homosexuality to be a form of love comparable to heterosexuality). The Vatican's aging, troglodyte hierarchy thus finds itself isolated on its home turf.

In Canada, where this year gay couples won the right to marry in two provinces, Prime Minister Jean Chrétien's government has prepared legislation giving gay marriage equality throughout the country. But the backlash in our neighbor to the north is against the Pope: After prelates threatened to excommunicate Chrétien, a poll found that 59 percent of Canadians opposed the Catholic Church's issuing directives to politicians on how to vote.

The Pope's antigay crusade is also obviously meant to distract attention from the church's ongoing pedophile scandals. The hypocrisy in the Vatican's *pronunciamento* that gay unions would lead to adoptions by gay couples, which "would actually mean doing violence to these children," was underscored when CBS News unearthed a secret Vatican directive, in force since 1962, to cover up priestly sex abuse under "penalty of excommunication" for any cleric who talked.

This revelation, however, is unlikely to keep the Pope's declarations from driving more of the devout into the GOP's eager embrace next November as Bush plays the gay marriage card.

DOUG IRELAND

Doug Ireland, a columnist for TomPaine.com and a longtime Nation *contributor, has written extensively on gay political issues.*

Science Gets Sacked

Faced with inconvenient scientific information, the Bush Administration just hits *delete*. This according to an explosive new report by Representative Henry Waxman, which catalogues dozens of politically driven affronts to objective scientific inquiry—from the recent Environmental Protection Agency report that was purged of information on global warming to the biased rewrite of a National Cancer Institute web page that once debunked alleged links between abortions and breast cancer. The Administration "has manipulated the scientific process and distorted or suppressed scientific findings," says the report, precipitating "misleading statements by the president, inaccurate responses to Congress...erroneous international communications and the gagging of scientists."

The editors of *Science*, *Nature*, *Scientific American* and the British journal *Lancet* have said as much in the past year, as have the ACLU, Human Rights Watch, the American Public Health Association and scores of HIV-prevention organizations. The latter have been hit particularly hard by the abstinence-obsessed Administration, sustaining Health and Human Services audits, loss of funding and wholesale attacks on the notion of safe sex. In July 2001, HHS quietly ordered the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's condom fact sheet offline—it went missing for more than a year and reappeared nearly unrecognizable, no longer stating that condoms are 98 to 100 percent effective as HIV prevention or explaining their proper use. Also axed was a "Programs that Work" section, which cited several large studies finding that teaching kids the facts about sex doesn't make them do it any earlier.

The manipulation has extended to scientific research itself: As the *New York Times* revealed in April, scientists are being advised to "cleanse" certain words from their federal grant applications—basic terms of HIV epidemiology like "men who have sex with men," "sex worker" and "needle exchange."

And when all else fails, the Administration has simply preached: In February, a hundred CDC researchers on sexually transmitted diseases were summoned to Washington by HHS deputy secretary Claude Allen for a daylong affair consisting entirely of speakers extolling abstinence until marriage. There were no panels or workshops, just endless testimonials, including one by a young woman calling herself "a born-again virgin."

Groups on the front lines, such as San Francisco's Stop AIDS Project, are feeling the heat. Stop AIDS runs workshops with names like "Bootylicious" and "In Our Prime: Men for Hire" (which offers guidelines for "safe relations with escorts"), designed to prevent HIV among sexually active gay men in the Bay Area—whose infection rates are rising—not high schoolers in Palo Alto. But Republican Congressman Marc Souder has led a two-year crusade against the group, claiming that it promotes sex with taxpayer dollars.

Stop AIDS faced fourteen solid months of back-to-back reviews by both the CDC and HHS—each activated by Souder's obscenity alarm. The group finally got a clean bill of health in February, and CDC director Julie Gerberding wrote personally to Souder telling him the news. Then it got personal. Beltway in-

THIS WEEK ON THE WEB: In his Q&A column, Dr. Marc Siegel discusses how the drive for healthcare profits works against patients; Matt Bivens calls out some of the frequently overlooked daily outrages perpetrated by the Bush Administration; and Katrina vanden Heuvel marvels at *Franken v. Fox* and offers tips to parents on how to talk to children about George W. Bush (www.thenation.com).

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COMMENT

siders said Souder pushed for Gerberding's resignation, and in April, Souder aide Roland Foster e-mailed the CDC demanding data showing "the effectiveness of erotic writing and sex with prostitutes" as disease prevention. Within weeks, CDC auditors were flying back across the country. Yet again, Stop AIDS passed muster—one auditor said to a CDC staffer, "I would take my mother to this."

The group got sanctioned anyway. In one more blatant victory of politics over public health, the CDC wrote to Stop AIDS on June 13 saying that the workshops violated the Public Health Service Act, which prohibits materials that might "promote or encourage, directly, homosexual or heterosexual activity." Gerberding, in an about-face, wrote to Souder, "I, too, share your concerns," and agreed that Stop AIDS was in violation, putting its federal funding in peril. This reversal from Gerberding, a former San Francisco AIDS doctor, stunned AIDS professionals, prompting a late June letter to George Bush with 151 signatories charging "censorship and intimidation."

Welcome to the new CDC. Once a partner to HIV experts, it is now their hysterical chaperone—and a case study in the new, pitched battle between science and ideology. "A climate of fear and intimidation has absolutely permeated the agency," says Mark McLaurin, policy associate for treatment and prevention advocacy at New York City's Gay Men's Health Crisis. The CDC was itself audited this past fall. Key prevention officers there have been laid off or reassigned, and a number of high-level officials have jumped ship—most recently eighteen-year veteran Lloyd Kolbe, who was head of the CDC's Division of Adolescent School Health. "There's been a major brain drain," says one staffer.

In defending the attack on Stop AIDS, Roland Foster told the *Washington Post*, "We'd like to know why we should continue to fund the same programs if there is no proof they're actually working." A curious statement, considering that more than $100 million is being spent annually on some 700 abstinence-only programs that have no oversight and fly in the face of dozens of peer-reviewed studies that back up condoms, comprehensive sex education, needle-exchange programs and frank, community-tailored information campaigns. Still, that's the kind of advice driving policy these days. The CDC's new HIV Initiative, made official in late July, will divert $42 million from prevention efforts like Stop AIDS that focus on populations at risk. Those left in the CDC who remember their mandate to prevent and control disease—not sexuality—could listen more closely to the message of the abstinence-only cabal: Just say no.

JENNIFER BLOCK

Jennifer Block is a New York City–based journalist.

CALVIN TRILLIN

SLEEP TIGHT: A LULLABY SUNG EACH NIGHT TO OSAMA BIN LADEN

Sleep tight. There's no one making much ado.
So sleep this night, Big O—in peace, sleep
through it.
The folks you bombed now never mention you.
They're chasing down a guy who didn't do it.

Wanted: Youth Appeal

The sullen attitude of most Democratic politicians toward young people is reflected in Hillary Clinton's memoir, *Living History*, in which she laments that people between the ages of 18 and 21 "still [have] the lowest registration and voter turnout of any age group. Their apathy makes it less likely that our national politics will reflect their concerns and safeguard their future."

In other words, it is not the job of older people to inspire younger people. It's their own fault if they don't appreciate what their elders did for them in the 1960s and '70s, not the fault of Democrats who made Social Security and prescription drugs their principal issues in 2002, and who communicate in language comprehensible only to devotees of C-Span while periodically indulging in attacks on youth culture. (Senator Clinton also praises Tipper Gore's moralizing about rock and hip-hop.)

Howard Dean and John Kerry, who are running neck and neck in early polls for the New Hampshire primary, would be well advised to avoid such nonsense. Not only do young people represent a sizable segment of undecided voters, their energy and enthusiasm influence many older voters, just as their taste in fashion and entertainment influences the larger pop culture.

The way for politicians to counter youth "apathy" is to take some responsibility for changing it. This includes picking youth-oriented issues (see Thomas Geoghegan, "Dems—Why Not Woo the Young?" July 21/28), using contemporary cultural language instead of Washington-speak (following the lead of Rock the Vote, which is regrouping for 2004) and expressing a coherent moral vision, not merely a shopping list of issues (see George Lakoff's book *Moral Politics*).

Dean's "surprising" surge has been fueled not only by his antiwar stand but also by a conscious youth-inclusive strategy. In his announcement speech Dean said his campaign is for "young people and the young at heart." He has empowered his campaign to create a dynamic and inclusive Internet strategy, which has won the admiration of many netizens. If Kerry, or any other potential candidate, is going to have a chance of stopping Dean's momentum, he'll have to compete for younger voters, not ignore them.

This is anathema to members of the hawkish and culturally conservative Democratic Leadership Council (DLC), who are trying to psych out progressives by warning them that they could be perceived as un-mainstream, like George McGovern in 1972, and suffer a similar landslide defeat.

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COMMENT

According to the "no new McGovern" advocates, McGovern's campaign was doomed by his militant antiwar stance, which they associate with young protesters. (On the contrary, Hunter S. Thompson, in *Fear and Loathing: On the Campaign Trail '72*, suggests that McGovern's mistake was that he abandoned the populist energy that got him the nomination and ran in the general election like a cautious political hack.) But the debate about Iraq is occurring in a different cultural context: It does not come in the middle of a generational culture war in which even one's hair length could be the cause of barroom violence. Nor does it come in the context of a left-right argument about the cold war. Advocates of the Iraq war do not own the national security issue, nor do they own the ability to say that they alone care about the troops and their families.

The DLC seems to imply that it is impossible to attract young people without alienating older ones. This certainly isn't the outlook of George W. Bush, who tries to look hip to younger voters, whether it's his faux daring landing on an aircraft carrier, his banter with Ozzy Osbourne at the White House correspondents dinner or his studied use of ordinary vernacular like "bring 'em on."

The truth is that McGovern's campaign left powerful footprints precisely because of its youthful energy. For most of the 1970s and '80s, the McGovern contributors list provided the backbone of countless progressive organizations, and many prominent Democrats, including Bill Clinton, cut their political teeth on the McGovern campaign.

It is John Kerry who seems most hobbled by the McGovern psych-out. The more relevant cautionary example for him, however, is Al Gore. In 2000, Gore ran away from his genuine progressive views about the environment and the Clinton policy legacy and in the debates was unable to convey his beliefs in a way that was comprehensible to the voters he needed. If Kerry is going to draw young people and their energy away from Dean, he has to evoke not only his military service but his birth in politics as a protester. He has to tune in with his pre-Congressional intensity. He has to balance his Washington gravitas with a twinkle in his eye.

If there is any McGovern-baiting in primary debates, progressives can deal with it the way Ronald Reagan handled Jimmy Carter's suggestion that he was too right-wing. They can take a deep breath, shake their head ruefully, smile unthreateningly and say, "There you go again." It's amazing what a few wistful smiles can do.

DANNY GOLDBERG

Danny Goldberg, who is on the board of Rock the Vote, is the author of Dispatches From the Culture Wars: How the Left Lost Teen Spirit *(Miramax Books).*

State of California Gubernatorial Recall Election Voter Guide

Voter Information

§ A smiley face is acceptable instead of a check mark as the indicator of your voting choice. If you wish to add color, stay within the circle. Stick-on smiley faces are available from the registrar.

§ You may bring no more than one crystal into the voting booth.

§ Do not attempt to relocate the ballot box, table or voting booth. Feng-shui has already been performed.

Candidate Information

§ A loud beep will sound if a new candidate enters the race while you are in the act of voting. Exit the booth, watch the DVD, then return to cast your vote.

§ Certain candidates are marked with a "?" on the ballot. This signifies that their candidacies are under legal challenge and may be disqualified before this election is completed. Challenged candidacies: Manson, DreamWorks, Nixon.

Ballot Information

If this is your first voting experience in the State of California, be advised that:

§ California uses a photo ballot. Choose the candidate whose looks you like most and put a check mark (or smiley face) next to his/her photo. Warning: If you tear out the photo from the ballot for personal use, you must pay a $5 fee.

§ If you are using a drive-thru voting booth, throw your ballot in the bin and DO NOT STOP.

§ If you are in Vegas on polling day, use one of the Quik-Vote boxes in the casino of your favorite hotel.

Write-Ins

§ If there is in your opinion a potential governor who is NOT on the official list of candidates, you may write in his/her name as your voting choice UNLESS he/she is already governor of another state or a cartoon character.

WARREN BEATTY AND BARBRA STREISAND JOKES STRICTLY FORBIDDEN.

Note: If the polls have closed by the time you finish reading this, there will be another election soon. Hold your vote for that election. In case you might forget, write your candidate's name on your wrist in indelible ink.

BRUCE MCCALL

Bruce McCall is a writer and painter whose latest book, All Meat Looks Like South America, *will be published by Crown in the fall.*

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JONATHAN SCHELL

Ways to Win

Events have suddenly and unexpectedly handed the Democratic Party an opportunity to defeat George W. Bush in 2004. His main justifications for his war in Iraq (existence of weapons of mass destruction, connections with Al Qaeda) have collapsed, while the war itself intensifies. At home, his tax cuts have sent deficits out of control and jobs are disappearing at a gallop. Each of these conditions seems likely to be either chronic or permanent: The prospect of finding actual weapons of mass destruction, though conceivable, has dimmed to the vanishing point; the cost in blood and treasure of the occupation seems likely to increase; the deficit is likely to remain high or get higher. On other issues—healthcare, the environment, education—the public trusts Democrats more than it does the President. His poll numbers have fallen, from the high sixties and mid-seventies a month or two ago to the mid-fifties today.

But it's one thing for Bush to fail, another for the Democrats to succeed. Debate within the party is sharpening. The questions for the antiwar wing of the party are especially acute. In a winner-take-all electoral system like ours, anyone who holds views that are outside the mainstream is faced with an obvious and inescapable dilemma: Should one vote for a candidate one agrees with wholeheartedly but seems likely to lose the election or vote for a candidate one doesn't much care for but seems likely to win? Which is worse, a noble defeat or an empty victory?

I can give myself as an example. I opposed the war in Iraq before it was launched and now regard it as a mounting disaster, with the worst yet to come. But according to a recent NBC News/*Wall Street Journal* poll, 69 percent of the public still think the war was worth it. Obviously, I'm out of step with the public. The candidate who best reflects my views is Dennis Kucinich. He not only opposed—and still opposes—the war; he wants to cut the Pentagon budget and shift the direction of American foreign policy toward peace and cooperation with the rest of the world. Second best from my standpoint is Howard Dean, who also opposed the war but now wants the United States to stay the course and keep Pentagon spending at present levels. Dean, as everyone knows, has been gaining support and appears to have a real chance to win the nomination. So, for me, Kucinich would be the more principled choice, Dean the more pragmatic choice. Yet Dean's views on the war, too, are outside mainstream opinion and could doom him in the general election. The cautionary example usually given is George McGovern, who rightly opposed the war in Vietnam in 1972 but lost to Richard Nixon in a landslide. Ever since, the Democratic Party has been running away from "McGovernism."

Other candidates propose to dive deliberately and immediately into the mainstream. One is Joseph Lieberman. In his words, the party must "go right up the middle." He says anyone who (like Dean) "was opposed to the war against Saddam, who has called for the repeal of all of the Bush tax cuts...could lead the Democratic Party into the political wilderness." Lieberman himself probably believes that the war was right, and that full repeal of the tax cuts would be wrong, but in this appeal he is clearly asking those of us who disagree with him to forget our beliefs and support him on purely pragmatic grounds. "The middle," of course, is, of mathematical necessity, the place that any candidate must be in if he is to win. And it's easier to move to the mainstream than to move the mainstream to you. (On the other hand, selling your principles for power doesn't always work. Quite often there are no buyers for the tarnished goods. President Clinton was admittedly a master of the art; but Lieberman doesn't seem to have the knack. You do not get to the middle by trumpeting "I am in the middle." You do it by saying things people in the middle like to hear. Claims to be in the middle are inside baseball, not the game itself. When candidates step up to the plate, they should swing at the pitch, not give commentaries on their batting technique.)

As it happens, McGovern, not merely a historical figure but a living person, and a thoughtful and articulate one at that, has jumped into the discussion. Calling the warnings against McGovernism "political baloney," he comments that although in 1972 he won only Massachusetts and the District of Columbia, "no war could have continued long after that election." He is suggesting that although the movement against the Vietnam War, of which his campaign was a powerful expression, never put a President in office, it nevertheless forced an end to the war. His point is that political influence can be exerted in more than one way: "Give me a presidential candidate who speaks the truth as he sees it, and I'll show you a candidate whose campaign, win or lose, will be good for the nation."

Other episodes in American history teach a similar lesson. When Lyndon Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964, he had the support of both Houses of Congress, including a majority of Republicans. But the politically acute President saw that the triumph had an immense future electoral cost attached. "I think we just gave the South to the Republicans," he commented. And indeed, in years to come the GOP, following the "Southern strategy" adopted by the same Richard Nixon who defeated McGovern, won the South from the Democrats, laying the basis for successes in the next several elections. And so even as civil rights was winning substantively, it lost politically. The public accepted the message but rejected the messengers, as it would also do with McGovern. Yet the victory was real: The nation was changed for the better. The national holiday born of the movement is Martin Luther King Day, not Richard Milhous Nixon Day. There will never be a Richard Milhous Nixon Day. Neither will there probably be a George McGovern Day, but posterity will honor him.

These episodes do not necessarily teach Democrats whom to vote for in 2004, but they do suggest some lessons. Victory does not come through the ballot box alone. It sometimes comes by circuitous paths. Electoral politics should be played to win, yet changing hearts and minds can at times be as important as changing the President. McGovern is right. When in doubt, it's best to err on the side of speaking the truth.

Jonathan Schell, the Harold Willens Peace Fellow of the Nation Institute, is the author of the just-published The Unconquerable World: Power, Nonviolence, and the Will of the People *(Metropolitan).*

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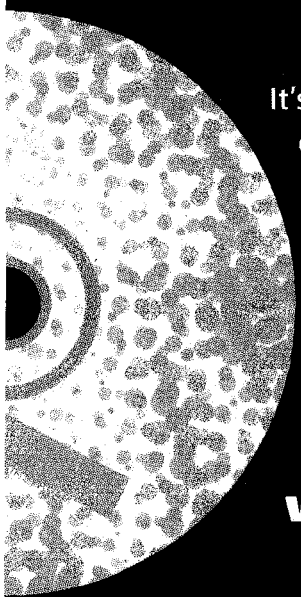

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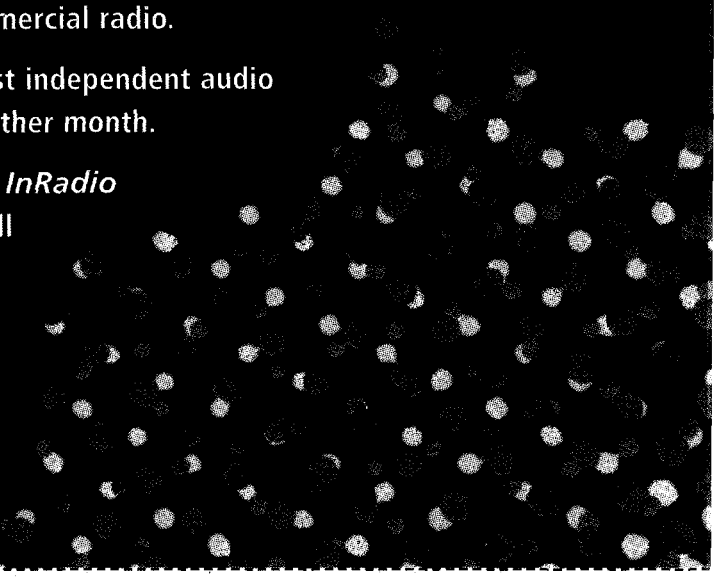

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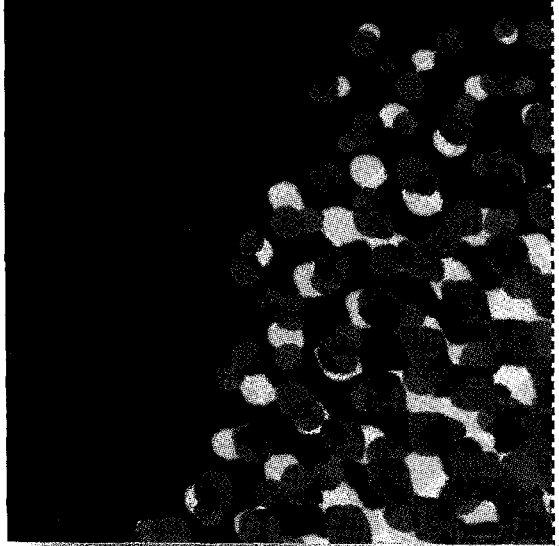

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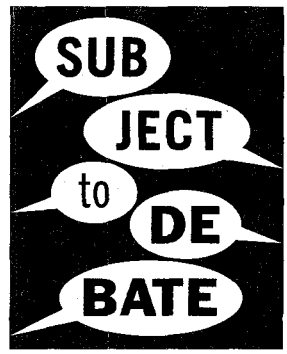
KATHA POLLITT

Selling Dean Short



What did Howard Dean do to make the media so snarky about his primary run? Now that he has emerged as a major fundraiser with flocks of enthusiastic supporters, a vigorous campaign staff, a bag full of Internet tricks and respectable—and rising—poll numbers, the pundits and reporters have to go through the motions of taking him seriously: In a single August week he was on the cover of *Time* and *Newsweek* and had a major story in *U.S. News & World Report*. But aside from some curiously cheerful coverage in the *Wall Street Journal*, they obviously don't like him. He's "brusque," "testy," the "ex-Governor of a speck of a state" and "a shrill Northeasterner," Karen Tumulty wrote in *Time*. "It's hard to imagine Dean's glorious season ending without disappointment," adds John Cloud in his profile in the same issue, in which he draws a labored and precious similarity between Dean and George W. Bush (both come from rich Republican families, both went to Yale, partied hearty, speak Spanish—never mind that Dean went to medical school while George II relied on his father's cronies to set him up in the oil business). "The Doctor Is In—In Your Face!" warns *U.S. News*. Over at *Newsweek* ("Destiny or Disaster?"), Jonathan Alter also finds "the diminutive family doctor" "brusque" and says he "strutted like a little Napoleon onto the floor of the usually genteel Vermont State Senate."

A little Napoleon? Is that the problem—Dean is short? (He's 5' 8".) In order to run for President one must not only be white, a man, married, religious and Southern—not to mention whatever the opposite of brusque may be—one must be tall as well? No wonder I love this man! Every time the press pooh-poohs his chances, every time they gloat over some trivial misstatement, every time they make fun of Vermont and describe his supporters as "Birkenstocked" "Deanyboppers," I think about the free ride the media give Bush, who says more false and foolish things in an afternoon than Dean has said in a lifetime, who is unmaking everything good about this country from Head Start to habeas corpus, who is stacking the government with faith healers and fanatics, my fingers itch to write Dean another check.

So what if on *Meet the Press* Dean gave ballpark answers to Tim Russert's gotcha questions about the number of soldiers in Iraq? Compared with the President he's a Talleyrand reborn. On July 14, Bush explained why the United States invaded Iraq as follows: "The larger point is, and the fundamental question is: Did Saddam Hussein have a weapons program? And the answer is: absolutely. And we gave him a chance to allow the inspectors in, and he wouldn't let them in. And therefore, after a reasonable request, we decided to remove him from power." Eat your heart out, Hans Blix! The President of the United States can bizarrely declare that weapons inspectors never entered Iraq, and that's not a news story. He's "likable," he's tall—he's not a Democrat.

Dean opposes the war on Iraq, wants to rescind the Bush tax cuts and has a plan for quasi-universal healthcare coverage. But he's not particularly progressive, despite the Democratic Leadership Council's accusation that he is on the "far left," "McGovern-Mondale" wing of the party and will lead it straight to hell. In the 1990s, he was a darling of the DLC, and he governed Vermont as a budget-balancing centrist ("I was a triangulator before Clinton was a triangulator," he recently told the *New York Times Magazine*). If you want a great platform on everything from single-payer health insurance (yes) to the death penalty (no), Dennis Kucinich is definitely your man. Indeed, some pundits predict that when Dean's lefty supporters discover Dean's center-right positions on such issues as Israel and welfare, his campaign will fizzle. "The guy they think Dean is, Dennis is," Jeff Cohen, Kucinich's ebullient communications director, told me, predicting an exodus of progressives from Dean to Kucinich as the truth comes out. (Presumably despite the fact that Kucinich is a whole inch shorter.)

Maybe so. But I've talked to quite a few Dean supporters, including mainstream Democrats, lapsed voters, flaming leftists, Naderites, gay activists, civil libertarians, anti–death penalty lawyers, pro–single payer health professionals and even a surprising number of *Nation* staffers. I have yet to find one who mistakes Dean for Eugene Debs, or even for Paul Wellstone, whose line about belonging to the "democratic wing of the Democratic Party" Dean likes to borrow. They've gone for Dean because, alone among the major Democratic contenders, he has taken Bush on in an aggressive and forthright way, because he's calling the craven Democratic Party to account and because they think he can win. "I have no illusions that Dean is a true progressive," said one young graduate student who describes himself as a leftist, "but I don't care. I just want to beat Bush. If Dean has the momentum, I say, go for it." That word "momentum" comes up a lot.

Right now, Dean is the only viable candidate who speaks to the anger, fear and loathing a large number of ordinary citizens feel about the direction Bush has taken the country, while the mainstream media blandly kowtow and the Democratic Party twiddles its thumbs. He has gone out and actually asked for the help of these citizens, rather than taking them for granted. That is why 70,000 people have sent him money, and why 84,000 have shown up to work for him, and why tens of thousands of volunteers wrote personal letters to Iowa and New Hampshire Democrats and independents urging them to support Dean. His willingness to challenge Bush without looking over his shoulder at the last undecided voter in Ohio is the big story—not whether he signed Vermont's civil union legislation in a private ceremony to avoid publicity, or even whether he insisted on balancing Vermont's budget at the expense of worthy social programs.

What the media see as progressive self-delusion is actually the opposite: a bare-knuckled pragmatism born from the debacle of the 2000 elections. If Kucinich can capture the public's imagination, great. If Kerry acquires more backbone and fire, fine. Right now, though, it looks like Howard Dean is Ralph Nader's gift to the Democratic Party. ■

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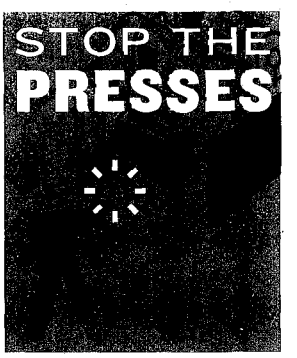
ERIC ALTERMAN

Patriotic Gore



The words "Al Gore" are properly understood to be synonymous with the words "cautious politician." And yet speaking to MoveOn.org at New York University recently, Gore gave voice to some plain-spoken truths that were just about unsayable in the mass media until he said them. Gore accused George W. Bush of undertaking "a systematic effort to manipulate facts in service to a totalistic ideology that is felt to be more important than the mandates of basic honesty." The President, he said, was "pursuing policies chosen in advance of the facts—policies designed to benefit friends and supporters—and [using] tactics that deprived the American people of any opportunity to effectively subject his arguments to the kind of informed scrutiny that is essential in our system of checks and balances." To top it all off, Gore nervily quoted George Akerlof, winner of the 2001 Nobel Prize for Economics, who told *Der Spiegel*, "This is the worst government the US has ever had in its more than 200 years of history."

The reaction was as swift as it was predictable. Recalling the hysterics of late *Washington Post* columnist Michael Kelly, who termed Gore's September 2002 antiwar speech to be "dishonest, cheap, low...hollow...wretched...vile...contemptible...a lie...a disgrace...equal parts mendacity, viciousness and smarm," *Post* editors accused Gore of leading his party "off a cliff" and "validat[ing] just about every conspiratorial theory of the antiwar left."

Yet on the very same day that these good citizens of Quinn-Broderville were fulminating about Al Gore, *Post* reporters Barton Gellman and Walter Pincus published a 5,331-word report detailing how Bush and his aides "made allegations depicting Iraq's nuclear weapons program as more active, more certain and more imminent in its threat than the data they had would support...withheld evidence that did not conform to their views," and "seldom corrected misstatements."

Ignoring the facts on page one of its own newspaper to launch ideologically inspired attacks on the truth is a time-honored tactic for the wingnuts who run the *Wall Street Journal* editorial page, but it is dismaying to see the same phenomenon taking hold at the *Post*—an editorial page that was considered "liberal" so recently that *The American Prospect*'s new editor, Michael Tomasky, mistakenly included it as such in his recent study of the relative ferocity of conservatives versus liberals.

It's worth noting, by contrast, that in Britain, Tony Blair is on the ropes for offenses against democracy that—while significant—pale in comparison to Bush's. Blair faces an aggressive, independent-minded media whose members consider it their job, in the words of the BBC's head of newsgathering, Adrian Van Klaveren, "to question governments...to hold governments to account.... This is not passive journalism. This is about trying to get information which others don't want us to know."

As *Guardian* editor Alan Rusbridger says, "The BBC is easily the most trusted institution in the country, and you feel like the government and the right-wing media almost want to bring it down." Indeed, the conservative campaign against the BBC is quite similar to that against the *New York Times*, with the difference that it has been more energetically earned. Bush is still riding high in this country in part because we lack institutions like the BBC and the *Guardian*—that is, a press that is not shy about inviting right-wing opprobrium as it carries out its mission of holding the government accountable for its actions.

Here, the mainstream media almost always allow the Bush Administration to lie without consequence. It's not that lies go unnoticed; it's just that it's considered bad manners to worry about so silly an issue—and never more so than when those lies are deployed to justify a needless war. Even frequent Bush apologist Howard "Conflict of Interest" Kurtz could not help noticing that when Bush said, "Did Saddam Hussein have a weapons program? And the answer is: absolutely. And we gave him a chance to allow the inspectors in, and he wouldn't let them in," his answer bore "no relation to reality." He asked his guest on CNN's *Reliable Sources*, "Why has that not been more made of by the press?" The *Post*'s Dana Milbank, who has established a deserved reputation as the toughest of all the regular White House correspondents, answers, "I think what people basically decided was this is just the President being the President. Occasionally he plays the wrong track and something comes out quite wrong. He is under a great deal of pressure."

There you have it. An American President is said to be "under a great deal of pressure"—unlike, say, Bill Clinton—and so the Washington press corps decide that "people" prefer that he not be held accountable even for his own deceitful words. No wonder that, as Rusbridger notes, the *Guardian* website is now serving the news needs of 2 million US readers per month, while BBC viewership here is also skyrocketing. These people are saying, "We can't get this kind of thing in America," says Rusbridger. He was here for a conference on war reporting the newspaper organized together with *New York* magazine and the New School's World Policy Institute. I asked Rusbridger if he happened to witness the famous Bush press conference where White House reporters happily acted as props for what was clearly a Karl Rove propaganda exercise. He said he found it "appalling," actually cringed watching it and wondered "how any information ever gets out at all."

It's not as if the information we need to judge our government is kept from us. The reporters are, for the most part, doing their jobs. But as the *Guardian*'s New York correspondent, Gary Younge, pointed out to the New School audience, "In the political context in America, there weren't that many takers for certain kinds of information." Indeed, you can learn what liars the members of the Bush Administration are on the front page of the *Washington Post*. But if you say so aloud, be prepared to be smeared as "paranoid" by the paper's editors.

The *Guardian*'s announcement that it's exploring the US market for a possible launch couldn't come at a more propitious moment. Here's hoping they come over and deliver to our media the kick in the arse they have worked so hard to deserve. ■

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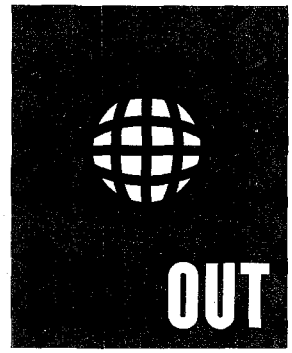
NAOMI KLEIN

Mutiny in Manila

What does it take to become a major news story in the summer of Arnold and Kobe, Ben and Jen?

A lot, as a group of young Philippine soldiers discovered recently. On July 27, 300 soldiers rigged a giant Manila shopping mall with C-4 explosives, accused one of Washington's closest allies of staging terrorist attacks to attract US military dollars—and still barely managed to make the international news.



That's our loss, because in the wake of the Marriott bombing in Jakarta and newly leaked intelligence reports claiming that the September 11 attacks were hatched in Manila, it looks like Southeast Asia is about to become the next major front in Washington's War on Terror™.

The Philippines and Indonesia may have missed the cut for the Axis of Evil, but the two countries do offer Washington something Iran and North Korea do not: US-friendly governments willing to help the Pentagon secure an easy win. Both Philippine President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and Indonesian President Megawati Sukarnoputri have embraced Bush's crusade as the perfect cover for their brutal cleansing of separatist movements from resource-rich regions—Mindanao in the Philippines, Aceh in Indonesia.

The Philippine government has already reaped a bonanza from its status as Washington's favored terror-fighting ally in Asia. US military aid increased from $2 million in 2001 to $80 million a year while US soldiers and Special Forces flooded into Mindanao to launch offensives against Abu Sayyaf, a group the White House claims has links to Al Qaeda.

This went on until mid-February, when the US-Philippine alliance suffered a major setback. On the eve of a new joint military operation involving more than 3,000 US soldiers, a Pentagon spokesperson told reporters that US troops in the Philippines would "actively participate" in combat—a deviation from the Arroyo administration's line that the soldiers were only conducting "trainings."

The difference is significant: A clause in the Philippine constitution bans combat by foreign soldiers on its soil, a safeguard against a return of the sprawling US military bases that were banished from the Philippines in 1992. The public outcry was so strong that the entire operation had to be called off, and future joint operations suspended.

In the six months since, while all eyes have been on Iraq, there has been a spike in terrorist bombings in Mindanao. Now, post-mutiny, the question is: Who did it? The government blames the Moro Islamic Liberation Front. The mutinous soldiers point the finger back at the military and the government, claiming that by inflating the terrorist threat, they are rebuilding the justification for more US aid and intervention.

Among the soldiers' claims:

§ that senior military officials, in collusion with the Arroyo regime, carried out last March's bombing of the airport of the southern city of Davao, as well as several other attacks. Thirty-eight people were killed in the bombings. The leader of the mutiny, Lieut. Antonio Trillanes, claims to have "hundreds" of witnesses who can testify to the plot.

§ that the army has fueled terrorism in Mindanao by selling weapons and ammunition to the very rebel forces the young soldiers were sent to fight.

§ that members of the military and police helped prisoners convicted of terrorist crimes escape from jail. The "final validation," according to Trillanes, was Fathur Rohman al-Ghozi's July 14 escape from a heavily guarded Manila prison. Al-Ghozi is a notorious bomb-maker with Jemaah Islamiyah, which has been linked to both the Bali and Marriott attacks.

§ that the government was on the verge of staging a new string of bombings to justify declaring martial law.

Arroyo denies the allegations and accuses the soldiers of being pawns of her unscrupulous opponents. The mutineers insist they were not trying to seize power but only wanted to expose a top-level conspiracy. When Arroyo promised to launch a full investigation into the allegations, the mutiny ended without violence.

Though the soldiers' tactics were widely condemned in the Philippines, there was widespread recognition in the press, and even inside the military, that their claims were "valid and legitimate," as retired Navy Capt. Danilo Vizmanos put it to me.

Local newspaper reports described the army's selling of weapons to rebels as "an open secret" and "common knowledge." The army's chief of staff, Gen. Narciso Abaya, conceded that there is "graft and corruption at all levels." And police have admitted that al-Ghozi couldn't have escaped from his cell without help from someone on the inside. Most significant, Victor Corpus, chief of army intelligence, resigned, though he denies any role in the Davao bombings.

Besides, the soldiers were not the first to accuse the Philippine government of bombing its own people. Days before the mutiny, a coalition of church groups, lawyers and NGOs launched a "fact-finding mission" to investigate persistent rumors that the state was involved in the Davao explosions. It is also investigating the possible involvement of US intelligence agencies.

These suspicions stem from a bizarre incident on May 16, 2002, in Davao. Michael Meiring, a US citizen, allegedly detonated explosives in his hotel room, injuring himself badly. While recovering in the hospital, Meiring was whisked away by two men, who witnesses say identified themselves as FBI agents, and flown to the United States. Local officials have demanded that Meiring return to face charges, to little effect. *BusinessWorld*, a leading Philippine newspaper, has published articles openly accusing Meiring of being a CIA agent involved in covert operations "to justify the stationing of American troops and bases in Mindanao."

Yet the Meiring affair has never been reported in the US press. And the mutinous soldiers' amazing allegations were no more than a one-day story. Maybe it just seemed too outlandish: an out-of-control government fanning the flames of terrorism to pump up its military budget, hold on to power and violate civil liberties.

Why would Americans be interested in something like that? ■

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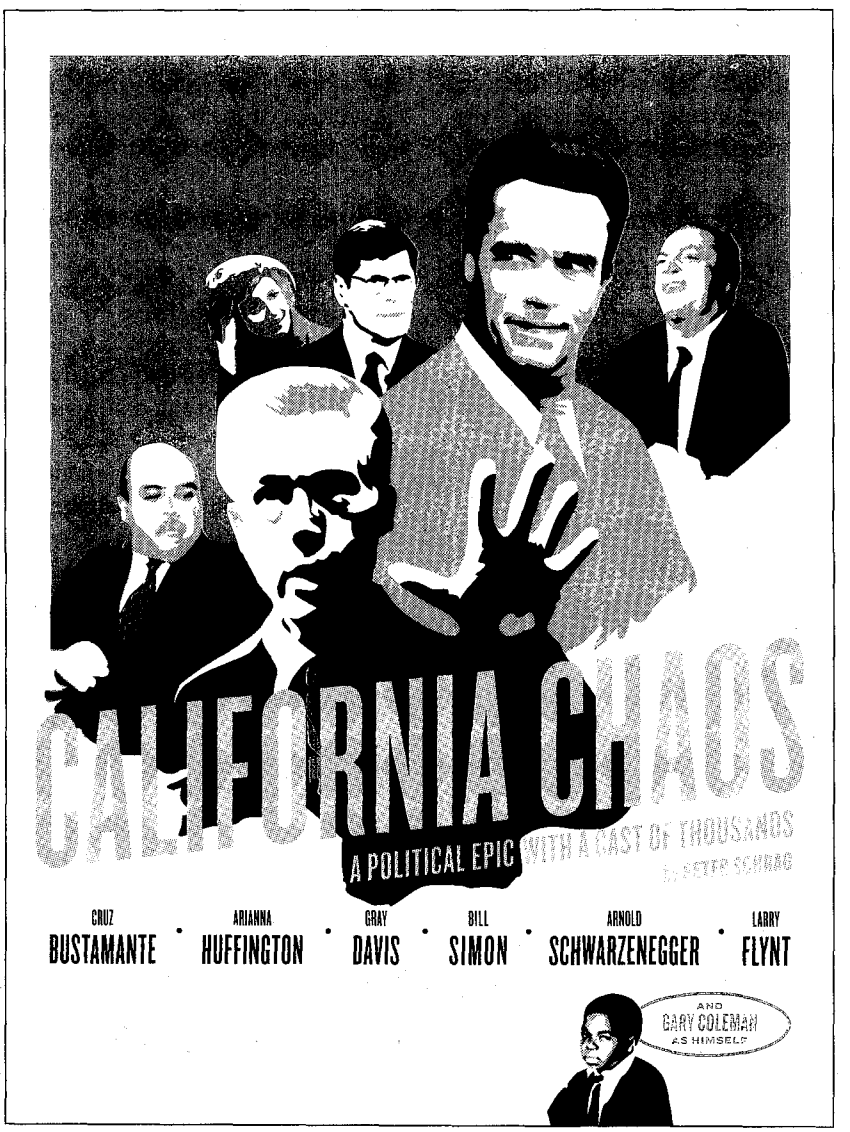
ARTICLES

The recall of California Governor Gray Davis, scheduled for a vote October 7, calls to mind Karl Marx's statement about history repeating itself, "the first time as tragedy, and the second as farce." But in the case of the California recall, it's tragedy, farce and a lot more all rolled into a single political event that's as portentous as it is bizarre. California is not the entertainment capital of the world for nothing.

There's no easy way to describe this unpredictable, multiring political circus. Late in July the backers of the recall, fueled by nearly $2 million from Representative Darrell Issa, a conservative, deep-pockets Southern California Congressman who hoped to succeed Davis, submitted 1.3 million valid signatures, far more than the 900,000 needed to qualify the recall.



That set in motion a process under which voters will decide on two questions: whether or not to recall Davis and, if a majority favors the recall, who should succeed him. But anything is still possible. The entry into the race of actor-muscleman Arnold Schwarzenegger early in August was a stunner that entirely changed the dynamics of the election, and, with major challenges still pending in the federal courts, there could well be more.

In the successor election there is no runoff; the candidate with the plurality wins. Thus someone with 15 or 20 percent of the vote—perhaps 1.2 million votes total, maybe less—could become the next governor of a state with 35 million people. And because anyone with a $3,500 filing fee and sixty-five voter signatures can get on the ballot, the successor vote could become an electoral crapshoot in which a relatively weak candidate could win. It also puts a premium on party discipline to concentrate support on one candidate. Given the some 140 candidates, from Schwarzenegger—regarded as a moderate, prochoice Republican, now the star attraction in this show, who promises to "clean house" of special-interest influence in Sacramento—to conservative businessman Bill Simon, who lost to Davis in 2002; to columnist Arianna Huffington, once a conservative, now a born-again progressive; to *Hustler* magazine publisher Larry Flynt, the next governor could be elected with fewer votes than Davis gets from people who want to retain him in office.

Schwarzenegger's following of movie fans makes him the dominant figure in this race. His entry immediately drove Issa out of the race—he quit one day after he formally announced—and brought in Cruz Bustamante, California's Democratic Lieutenant Governor, the first Latino to hold statewide elected office in the state's modern history, thereby breaking not only his pledge not to run but his party's vow to put all its eggs into the fight to support Davis. Bustamante's campaign, which other Democrats are now forced to support, is to oppose the recall but offer himself as the successor if Davis is recalled.

What's certain is that the recall will make it hard for anyone but a highly regarded and skilled politician to gain the legitimacy and credibility to govern a state already suffering from a combination of severe fiscal problems and dysfunctional government that threatens to decimate public services and produce deficits for years to come. Under the surface there's also the ethnic tension, always more intense in bad economic times, generated by the state's enormous demographic changes of the past forty years.

People who know him regard Schwarzenegger as far more thoughtful and smarter than his wooden Terminator personality suggests. He'll bring new voters to the polls, and though he's competing with two other big-name Republicans (against one Democrat), he still dominates both the media and the race. But can Schwarzenegger, who has no political experience and isn't very articulate, and whose views on major state issues are unknown,

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probably even to himself, achieve that credibility? Given the impact of California on the nation's economy and politics, that's not an idle question.

The Democrats' vow to stay out of the successor election was always risky. As the private polls showing Davis's vulnerability began to come in, they generated intense pressure on Senator Dianne Feinstein, California's most respected politician, to get into the race. That would have sealed Davis's fate, but it would also have given the state a chance to regain some equilibrium after the recall and to stabilize its deficit-racked finances. "We need a grown-up," said one well-connected Democrat, who was among the leaders of the unsuccessful Feinstein draft.

There's been a lot of talk about the recall as a Republican coup. In the context of the impeachment of President Clinton, the 2000 Florida recount battle and GOP House leader Tom DeLay's attempt to force a second reapportionment of Texas's Congressional districts, the charge was hardly surprising.

Can Schwarzenegger, who has no political experience, achieve the credibility needed to govern a state with California's myriad problems?

When the recall began, however, that talk was unfounded. In the first months of the campaign, the White House and those who speak for it in California tried to stay as far away from it as they could: Gerald Parsky, the White House's man in California, called it a diversion of money and energy from George Bush's re-election efforts; more recently Bush himself said the recall was a matter for Californians to decide. Given the concerns of the California Business Roundtable, most of whose members are Republicans, that the recall "will have no positive productive results," and the beating Bush political guru Karl Rove took from Davis in his failed attempt to help former Los Angeles Mayor Richard Riordan in the California GOP primary in 2002, that diffidence made sense.

But since then, Bush himself has publicly declared that Schwarzenegger would make a good governor even as California papers turned up a memo declaring that White House operatives "will be coordinating seven simultaneous media-friendly events throughout California" to foster the recall.

Nonetheless, there are risks for Bush. The state's constitution has ambiguous language that, without much of a stretch, would automatically make the lieutenant governor the governor's successor in the event of any vacancy in the office—indeed, that's his principal reason for existence. Since Bustamante received more votes last November than any Republican is likely to get in the successor election (or that Bustamante himself will get), it raises the possibility that the ghost of the all-but-forgotten *Bush v. Gore* fight over the 2000 Florida recount could stalk not only the state but Bush and the national Republican Party next year. A challenge based on the constitutional ambiguity was quickly rejected by a unanimous state Supreme Court, which includes one Democrat named by Davis. Given the reluctance of the justices, who are themselves subject to recall, to get into any political fight, that's hardly surprising. But the fact that the court is dominated by Republicans, that budget constraints will sharply reduce the number of polling places in this election, making it harder for voters to get to the polls, and that a lot of punch-card ballots will still be used easily invites comparisons with Florida. Local election officials, moreover, are having nervous fits wondering how they're going to fit the huge list of candidates on ballots.

In fact, the most troublesome element of the recall is its sheer unpredictability. While the recall has been in the California constitution since 1911, no recall of a statewide official has ever qualified. (Only one governor has ever been recalled, and that was in North Dakota in 1921.) But there have been countless recalls of local officials, school-board members particularly, some of which led to bitter tit-for-tat campaigns in which the board members who succeeded recalled incumbents were themselves recalled. That's produced warnings, like those of GOP media consultant Bob Gardner, of "retaliation and retribution [that] will launch a continuous cycle of disruption and disillusionment, insuring that nothing is accomplished."

The recall has already produced all manner of extraneous (though maybe not entirely unintended) consequences—particularly the additional pressure on Davis and Democratic legislators to accede to GOP demands for a no-new-taxes budget with large spending cuts in higher education, healthcare and other services. Simultaneously, because public-sector employee unions and other labor groups are funding much of Davis's anti-recall campaign, it's given them even more clout with the Governor.

Given California's orgy of initiatives in the past generation and its penchant for populist eruptions, it was probably only a matter of time before the recall booby trap went off. The Davis recall qualified just twenty-five years after the passage in 1978 of Proposition 13, the measure that cut local property taxes by nearly 60 percent, capped the rate at 1 percent and started the rush of plebiscites that continues to this day.

In the years since, Californians have passed scores of initiatives—from a ban on affirmative action and attempts to deny schooling to illegal immigrants to legislative term limits and the legalization of medical marijuana. Collectively, those measures have shifted the center of gravity in policy-making from elected representatives to the initiative process; simultaneously, because each initiative either mandates or prohibits some legislative act, they circumscribe the legislature's discretion and thus its ability to respond, thereby creating still more frustrations among voters and leading to yet more ballot measures.

The orgy of plebiscites has also spawned a thriving industry of campaign consultants, pollsters, media experts and petition circulators, who, at an average of one or two dollars per signature, will get almost anything on the ballot, provided the sponsors have the $1–$2 million it takes. Ted Costa, a longtime antitax activist and a veteran of the Proposition 13 campaign, launched the recall barely three months after Davis's re-election last year. But it was going nowhere until Issa began writing big checks.

But Costa, Issa and their partners were working fertile ground. The poll-driven Davis, who's never had many friends, was always

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Peter Schrag, a columnist with the Sacramento Bee, *is the author of* Paradise Lost: California's Experience, America's Future *(California).*

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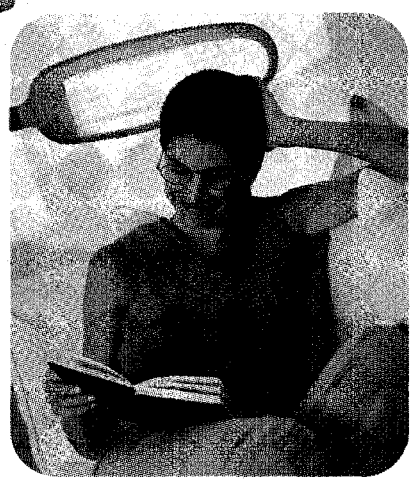

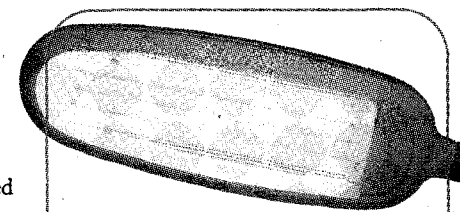

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a relentless fundraiser who ran famously negative campaigns, including his successful undoing during last year's GOP primary of Riordan, the candidate thought to be his strongest potential opponent. In effect, Davis picked his opponent and then narrowly beat him. Davis also dallied in the early months of California's energy crisis in 2000–01, when a combination of mismanagement and market manipulation by energy producers drove the state's wholesale electricity prices to obscene levels. He awarded huge pay increases to the state's corrections officers, whose union had contributed lavishly to his campaigns, and he has developed a reputation as a man who is simply inaccessible to groups that don't kick in to his extortionate campaign-funding demands.

Compounding all that was a set of economic and political problems, some of them uniquely California's, some national, over which Davis has only partial control. The most obvious is the state's huge two-year, $38 billion budget deficit, caused in part by the national recession, particularly the sinking high-tech industry; in part by a tax structure that magnifies both gains in good times and the losses in declines; and in part by the sharp increase in healthcare costs and, as in many other states, by the spending increases and tax cuts of the good years.

Given California's orgy of initiatives in the past generation, it was probably only a matter of time before the recall booby trap went off.

But California also had, and has, problems uniquely its own, particularly the constitutional provision that requires a two-thirds majority in the legislature to pass a budget (California is one of three states to have such a requirement). Thus while Democrats control both houses as well as the governor's office, the Republican minority has an effective veto over the budget.

In past years Davis was able to peel off a few GOP legislators by offering them some goodies for themselves or their districts. But this year, following the strategy of the ultraconservative Club for Growth—which launched attacks against GOP moderates like Senator Olympia Snowe of Maine, who resisted the extremes of George Bush's tax cuts—Jim Brulte, the Republican leader in the California Senate, threatened any defector with a primary challenge next spring. Blame for the resulting delay went in large part to Davis.

There are yet other elements that, if not unique to California, combined with particular force, among them the state's very tight term limits, which, in restricting Assembly members to three two-year terms and state senators to two four-year terms, deprive the system of experience, loyalty and concern about the future; and a redistricting plan that, as in the US Congress, leaves very few competitive seats and thus makes party primaries, which draw the most fervent partisans, the most important determinants of who sits in the legislature. Moderates are scarce and compromise hard to achieve.

And so is moderation. While there's no evidence of a GOP coup, the miasma of political ill will, and particularly the extremes of GOP partisanship and the personal and ideological animosities that come with it, are very much part of California's political atmosphere. Davis, the Democratic governor of the nation's largest and perhaps most liberal state, has been a harsh critic of the Bush Administration—particularly for its failure to help check wholesale electricity and gas prices during the crisis of 2000–01. California has been a target of Administration sniping ever since.

But under this new wave of manipulated "we won't take it anymore" populism, there may yet be another significant, though little-discussed, element: the reaction to immigration and the state's rapidly changing ethnic mix. "Our State is bankrupt from subsidizing Mexicans," said one of my recent reader e-mails, "and it is going to stop—one way or another." The sentiment got full expression recently from columnist and sometime presidential candidate Pat Buchanan, who not only pronounced California dead but gave the cause: "massive and unrestricted immigration—an un-repelled invasion from Mexico [to] seek jobs and take advantage of the health care, welfare and free education Americans provided for their people."

Davis's dismally low approval ratings, which will sink still lower when Californians get their new, much higher auto-license bills in the coming weeks, are inseparable from the high number of Californians who tell pollsters the state is heading in the wrong direction. In a huge state like California, where few people know the names of their legislators, the governor is everyone's target. For mainstream politicians, publicly bashing immigrants is gauche these days, but the link is often there, just as it was in 1994, when Californians passed Proposition 187 denying social services to illegal immigrants (which Schwarzenegger voted for) and when Governor Pete Wilson's re-election commercials (produced by the same campaign team that now works for Schwarzenegger) rang with the refrain, "They keep coming."

Because only eighteen states have the recall and so many things in this recall are unique to California, this movement probably won't sweep the country, as the tax revolt did twenty-five years ago. If Schwarzenegger replaces Davis, he even could move California's very conservative GOP toward the center and give Bush a boost in 2004. But it will take a lot more than slogans about cleaning house and pumping up Sacramento to solve California's huge fiscal and governmental problems. Conversely, if by some odd roll of the dice an antiabortion right-winger becomes the next governor, his election could combine with the Florida ghost to energize Democrats and moderate voters, particularly prochoice women, in every part of the country. Bustamante will draw Latinos (and thus Democrats) to the polls, but his very presence in the race reduces Davis's chances of survival. And if Davis is recalled, it could intimidate a lot of other politicians, and not just in California.

So far, despite his macho slogans, nothing from Schwarzenegger has given any indication of how he would restore confidence in California's government, once a national model; stop the already severe Mississippification of its public services and dampen the state's partisan bitterness and political incivility.

And this isn't just a California problem. As the nation increasingly feels the same demographic shifts now evident in California, as it perceives itself under greater pressure from what Buchanan calls Third Worldization and as federal deficits, reductions in public services and tax cuts for the wealthy further hollow out the middle class, the stresses that produced the Davis recall will inevitably find their outlets. ■

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Letter From Rwanda

by Victoria Brittain

The main road out of Kigali winds past steep slopes packed with small wooden shacks, a reminder of how overcrowded this tiny country is. Once outside the capital and into Gitarama province it is a different picture—high hills stretch into the distance, and the villages on the hilltops are widely spaced, disappearing in the mist that hangs over them. The tarmac soon turns into a red dirt road pitted with huge potholes. It rises fast, through banana groves, past barefoot children minding cattle with great curving white horns, and outside wattle huts with straw roofs smaller children play. A very occasional motorbike or battered truck passes, but otherwise the only sound is birdsong.

This is the rural Africa of no running water or electricity, no hint of the modern world of instant communications, computers and mobile phones. In a scene so quiet, it is impossible to imagine the terror that gripped this place nearly a decade ago, when up to a million people were butchered, many with the machetes used for farming, in three months of organized genocide against the Tutsi minority.

The government that trained, armed and ordered men and women from the majority Hutu tribe to kill all Tutsis (whom they called "cockroaches") took this extreme step to subvert a power-sharing agreement brokered in neighboring Tanzania with the armed rebels of the Tutsi-led Rwandese Patriotic Front (RPF), led by the current president, Paul Kagame. In 1994 the country was ripped apart, with the vast majority participating in killings, rape, mutilation, looting and burning of property.

Justice, not only for survivors but also to enable the whole country to live again, is widely recognized as key to the future. The United Nations Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, which sits in Arusha in neighboring Tanzania, is trying major genocide suspects but has been plagued by internal bickering and inefficiency. It has completed only fifteen cases, and acknowledges that it will be unable to complete the trials of the forty-nine suspects now under arrest before it ends in 2008. Its squandered budget of $180 million a year could have helped Rwanda apply its own solutions to many problems, and not just in the justice area.

In Rwanda around 120,000 men, women and some children packed the jails beginning soon after the genocide and have been fed and supervised by the International Committee of the Red Cross. Sometimes, rounding one of the hairpin bends on the main roads, you see a work-party of men in pink uniforms mending the road or building a house. The broken judiciary, rebuilt at record speed, has begun trials, but it could never complete anywhere near 100,000 in this generation. Recently 23,000 of these suspects were released because they were very old, sick or young, or were among those who had already confessed to crimes and seen their probable sentence commuted to half, which they had already served.

An ambitious attempt to close the chapter of the 1994 genocide is now being played out on hilltops with traditional local courts, called *gacaca*, sitting to judge what their families and neighbors did in the terrible months of violence from October 1990 to December 1994. Each community elects nineteen judges—respected in the community and not necessarily literate—and the whole community sits as a general assembly to hear confessions and accusations. Each assembly will sit seven times, establish who was there during the genocide, who was killed, who lost their property, who was responsible. The lowest court, at village level, will sentence only property crimes—category 4—while more serious crimes—categories 3 and 2—will be tried at sector and district *gacaca* courts. Only those accused of ordering killings, or of rape—category 1 cases—will be tried in a conventional court.

Earlier this summer, under a big tree, a row of wooden benches and stools was set out for the nineteen elected judges in the village of Kigese, and in front of them, the villagers sat in rows on the grass, women and babies in front, men behind. People arrived in ones and twos, suddenly emerging from the head-high maize stalks from all directions. Each one would greet every person along the line with a handshake, or the Rwandan customary restrained embrace, hands on the other's shoulders, before sitting down. This is a society where politeness and rituals are all-important, and in a small community like this everyone knows everyone, and everything about them.

Sixteen of the nineteen elected judges were present on this day, and before the session opened they were studying rule books, some making notes. One hundred people are a quorum, and by 10:30, 120 residents of Kigese were present. The deputy chairman, an elderly man with the gnarled skin of peasant work, dressed in dark trousers and battered shoes, asked everyone to rise for a moment's silence and reflection on the events that had brought them there. Then he read the rules, reminding people that there could be no interrupting of witnesses, courtesy must be maintained, the truth must be told. He then invited those with written confessions to bring them forward.

Two men rose from among the audience, one young, in a khaki suit with short trousers, the other older, with a white shirt. They gave folded sheets of paper to the secretary, a young woman with a mobile, intelligent face, wearing a worn red T-shirt and rubber sandals. As they turned to go back to their places, another two men, and then another two, came forward and handed over papers. The confession of one was read out in Kinyarwanda, and the man stood at the front while people questioned him: "Why is this story different from what you said last time?" Through a long morning, another four men, brought in from police cells, rose from

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their place sitting among their peers and came to the front for questioning.

Over years of interviewing genocide suspects in prison in Rwanda, I have found that all the people I have spoken to, both men and women, have always denied their guilt, each blaming another as the organizer of their group. Kigese was at first seemingly little different. But then the confident body language of the suspects began to change, sometimes as a number of women witnesses rose to speak of the day and the moment when they had seen a suspect searching for a particular victim, or coming home and taking the property of someone just killed. One woman, looking straight ahead and not at the man being cross-questioned, said to him, "You killed my son." After a rambling denial from him, she spoke again, calm and determined: "You killed my son." The chairman told her gently that her case would not be discussed immediately, but would be heard another day.

As the hours went on, contradictory stories were told, and witnesses and defendants went off on irrelevant stories. Many times someone in the general assembly rose to ask the chairman to keep the witnesses to the point. But no one shouted or showed anger, no one wandered away or chatted with his or her neighbor. *Gacaca* is certainly a scene of considerable confusion, and one that cannot bring precise justice, but it is a dignified process, and the village confronts experiences of terror, deep sorrow and collective guilt in a unique and promising way.

An ambitious attempt to address the 1994 genocide is being played out with traditional local courts, called gacaca.

The Minister of Justice, Jean de Dieu Mucyo, wears a dark suit and speaks rapid-fire French. In this former Belgian colony French was the prevailing European language, but today Anglophone ministers are more common because so many in the Tutsi diaspora were educated in English-speaking Tanzania or Uganda, where the RPF was started among young Rwandans serving in Uganda's army. The minister's busy modern office in Kigali seems remote from a place like Kigese, but he has been speaking in such villages for months. "*Gacaca* is not perfect, but it is much better than conventional justice; and with time, patience, this very long process we have started will give us what we must know, we must know what happened," he says. He tells two stories, which illustrate both the drama of the process for individuals and the shrewd calculation that makes many of yesterday's killers a continuing threat. The first is about a man who confessed to participating in the genocide, and when he was then freed, died of shock. The second is of how prisoners abruptly stopped confessing when there was a spate of incursions from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), formerly Zaire, and rumors ran around the prisons that the tide had turned, the present government would be overthrown, the 1994 genocide would become considered just another episode of violence and the Hutu majority would be back in power.

The end of the culture of impunity in Rwanda, which saw successive massacres and dispossession of Tutsis in 1959, 1960, 1961, 1963, 1964 and 1972—making them in their diaspora the Palestinians of Africa—is at the center of this government's goals. The public execution of twenty-two *genocidaires* in the early days of the new regime, led by then-General Paul Kagame, showed Rwandans just how seriously the new authorities took this question. The rejection of the pleas to halt the executions—from the Pope, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, then–UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Mary Robinson and others—was an early indication that the outside world could not impose conventional solutions to problems here.

Like many of Rwanda's original home-grown solutions to political and security problems, so overwhelming that outsiders find them almost impossible to grasp, *gacaca* has come in for harsh criticism as unworkable from some sections of the donor community. How can untrained and mainly illiterate peasants be trusted with the judgment of tangled tales often involving their own relations? Where is the administrative capacity to process 100,000 dossiers, or more? What will happen to the approximately half a million new suspects, now at large, named already in suspects' confessions during the *gacaca* process of the past few months? What does the election as judges of some people known to have been active participants in the genocide say about the fairness of the trials?

With *gacaca* the government has calculated that enough guilty people "will want a second chance to live a decent life," as the president put it, and will therefore confess. *Gacaca*, with its emphasis on collective truth-telling as a means toward reconciliation rather than summary justice and punishment, has more elements in common with South Africa's traveling Truth and Reconciliation Commission of the 1990s than with, say, Latin American versions following dictatorships, such as Peru's. Typically, it is home-grown to meet the unique and overwhelming problem of majority participation in the genocide. Foreign lawyers and organizations such as Penal Reform International and African Rights are conducting careful studies of the process.

"I have wanted to be original about my own thinking, especially in regard to my own situation here," Kagame told *New Yorker* journalist Philip Gourevitch some years ago, when his reputation was as a military intelligence chief, a brilliant military strategist who won a guerrilla war against all odds. Later he became Rwanda's president, and that uncompromising determination to go with his own original way of doing things has brought some misunderstandings, and some dangerous enemies.

Gacaca is the centerpiece of an ambitious set of reforms this year that has already seen the writing of a new constitution, overwhelmingly passed by a referendum in May, and will see presidential elections this August and parliamentary elections in September. With the elections the current leadership has calculated that Rwandans will buck the trend of ethnic voting in Africa and instead vote for a party (the RPF) and a president who have proved they can bring stability, offer reintegration to old enemies and begin to revive an economy at rock bottom. The RPF currently leads a transitional government of eight parties, and the prime minister is from a prominent political family identified with Hutu-power politics in a previous period, and from a party now banned because of its divisiveness on ethnic issues. This ban is sharply criticized by the donors as antidemocratic,

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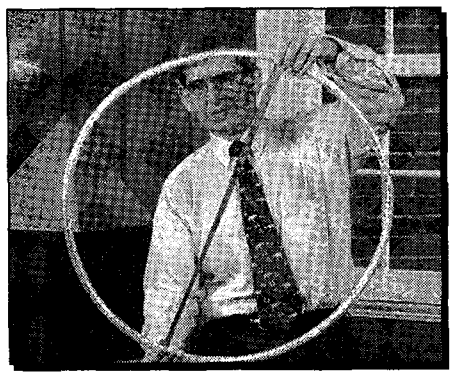

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though given what the last "democratically elected" government did here in 1994, this seems shortsighted.

With a few individual exceptions, the donor community and Western nongovernmental organizations have rather strained relations with the government, which they criticize as inward-looking, paranoid and controlling, and which they accuse of stoking the war in the eastern part of the DRC. This perception of reality is in total contrast to how the Rwandan government and military leadership experience nine years of bringing Rwanda back from the abyss of hate and destruction of 1994. Generous outreach to exiles not personally responsible for the genocide is an ongoing policy, while the reintegration of many former soldiers recently returned from the DRC, in their villages, augurs well for *gacaca*.

The influential New York–based Human Rights Watch has set the harshest critical tone, with Amnesty International and the Brussels-based International Crisis Group using similar language. A much-quoted UN report blamed Rwanda (among others) for looting the DRC's wealth, though it has been little noticed that the report had to be rewritten twice because of errors, and even some of those close to it say that none of the assertions against Rwanda were supported with evidence.

President Kagame is typically cool about the criticisms: "It is because again we want to do things our own way—they want to give lessons.... This hysteria always mounts when there is a big event: the constitution, the elections. They forecast disaster. We just have to go on with our own business of changing lives here."

Not surprisingly, among the most vociferous critics are the French, who have never forgiven the RPF for winning the war against the French-backed regime responsible for the genocide, and for thwarting the French military's Operation Turquoise, which occupied a swath of western Rwanda in 1994 as part of an effort to preserve its clients. Then, in 1996, the Rwandan military attacked and closed the refugee camps in eastern Zaire controlled by the *genocidaires* of 1994, where active military training and resupply for another genocide carried out under the noses of the international organizations feeding and caring for 2 million refugees was under way. More than a million peasants then walked home and were resettled, with the help of the UN's High Commissioner for Refugees, in an extraordinary feat of organization.

However, around 370,000 soldiers and militia of the former regime fled west through Zaire and regrouped in Zambia, the Central African Republic, Congo-Brazzaville, Cameroon and Angola, with leaders also in Benin, Togo and Kenya. In one of the astonishing twists of regional politics that have bedeviled the Great Lakes in recent years, *genocidaires* were taken from their refugee camps across the region into Kinshasa's army. They believed, as prisoners and deserters have testified, that they would return to Rwanda and complete the genocide. Today 15,000 of them are still military players for the Kinshasa government in the DRC's intense power struggle. Rwanda's security, and its moves toward normality after decades of state-sponsored ethnic hatred, harassment and destruction, are thus still threatened by the leadership flaws in the DRC.

But up on hills like Kigese, a very different world of peace may be built by *gacaca*. The mass participation of these peasants, the confessions and the apologies are the most hopeful sign that Rwanda can become synonymous not with genocide but with an extraordinary reconciliation. Then there will not be another generation of people like Venuste, a middle-aged survivor of the genocide, whose right arm is a stump that still twitches painfully when he writes with his left hand, and who talked to me last month in Kigali of survivors' feelings of "loneliness, unbearable loneliness," through the years since 1994. ■

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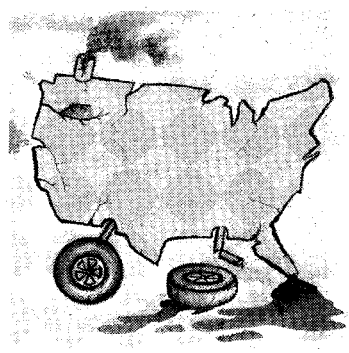

KAREN CALDICOTT

I contend—unfashionably and, I know, incredibly, given the consensus—almost the opposite. The American economy has great strengths, but it is not so all-conquering. And the American Business Model, with its ruthless focus on shareholder profits, has profound weaknesses. Indeed, American industry is at its strongest where it has not observed antistate, progreed precepts and operated in more European ways. Smart action by the state, a viable social contract and efforts by companies to harness human capital and serve a purpose larger than short-term profit maximization turn out to be indispensable components of successful American capitalism as well—though America's

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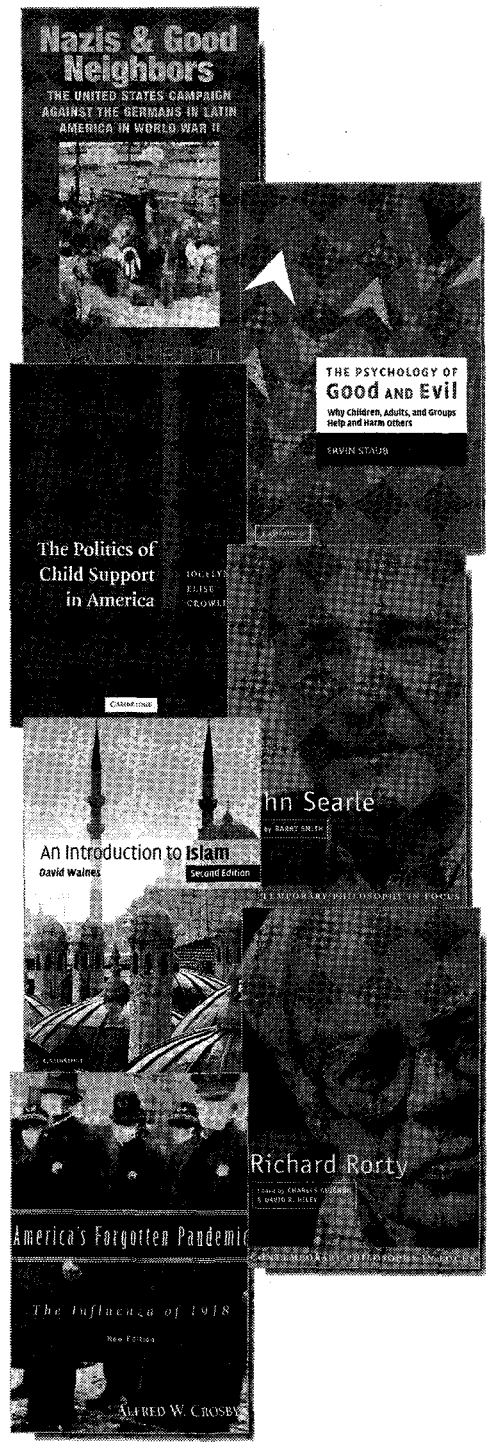
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public conversation hardly concedes these points. It's a gaping omission that is costing the country dearly.

Signs of trouble are everywhere. For a start, the United States is experiencing an alarming and unsustainable growth of international indebtedness. By the end of this year the country's net liability to the rest of the world will approach $3 trillion, and it is growing exponentially. At the current rate, liabilities will double again over the next five to seven years, taking the United States into banana republic territory. At some point foreigners will cease holding dollars and instead buy the alternative world currency—the euro. The dollar will crash and interest rates will jerk upward in response.

America has been running a trade deficit for so long that it has ceased to be worthy of note. Yet the consistent inability of so many American companies in so many sectors to compete against their foreign rivals surely exposes faults in our approach to investment and productivity. From cars to aerospace, industrial gases to cell phones, American companies lag behind their European competitors in technology, production savvy and rate of innovation. Ford and GM are a decade behind Volkswagen in the sophistication of their production techniques. Nokia has 39 percent of the world mobile phone market, more than twice that of Motorola, its nearest rival—despite Nokia's being based in the highly taxed, highly unionized, generous welfare state of Finland. Boeing's government subsidies through its military contracts, grants and tax breaks comfortably match the diminishing support proffered Europe's Airbus, but it is Airbus that is pioneering the next generation of civilian aircraft and whose market share is larger. British Rolls Royce is the trailblazer in aero-engines. And so on. Beyond the sheltered world of America's defense industrial complex, where fat Pentagon contracts helped create outstanding technological leadership in weapons and the Internet, there is scarcely a high-tech sector where US companies can claim systematic leadership over their European competitors—a truth you would scarcely know from a casual inspection of the American business press.

The inability of American companies in so many sectors to compete against their foreign rivals surely exposes faults in our approach.

America's once proud culture of business building has given way to a culture of financial engineering, a doctrine of shareholder value maximization and a cult of the takeover. The game is to keep the share price up, and every sinew of the organization is bent to that end; shortcuts are ever tempting, and inevitably some companies resort to straight fraud. Nevertheless, the conservative inclination is to overlook one or two bad apples like Enron and WorldCom and to celebrate the rule of America's capital markets. It is Wall Street constantly holding corporate managements to account that drives up innovation and productivity, or so runs the conventional argument, with companies that fail to keep up facing a takeover.

Yet the evidence is that takeovers fail to raise shareholder value; consultant KPMG reports in a survey of 700 takeovers that more than four out of five either added no value or lost it. Still, investment banks continue to seduce overpaid CEO after CEO into believing that his deal will be the exception. And with share options that will provide fortunes if the deal comes off and golden parachute clauses that will secure an equally good pay-off if it bombs, most CEOs fall prey to the seduction. Despite a welcome wave of criticism of this febrile, amoral atmosphere, few took note in the heady days of the dot-com and telecom bubbles that this system was hollowing out the US economy. It is coming back to haunt the United States now.

American productivity measured as output for every person-hour worked is now lower than in France, the old West Germany, Belgium and Holland. Most other parts of Europe are catching up with the United States fast, a trend that began in the late 1960s and has been continuing ever since. Economist Julian Callow of Credit Suisse First Boston calculates that after adjusting for the very kind way American statisticians compute productivity compared with those in Europe, Europe's growth in productivity outstripped the United States during the 1990s.

This is the reality behind the ballooning current account deficit numbers. The US economy may boast an innovative IT sector and technological leadership in the military industry; beyond that, its claims for universal competitive strength are more and more dubious. Of course, America is home to some great companies, but not so many to justify the fawning acceptance that the American Business Model is better in every respect than the European one.

Europeans do not view the company as a casino chip to be traded away in a single-minded quest to enrich directors and shareholders. Rather, they see companies as living things, each one a network of human relationships organized to serve an overriding economic and social purpose. In the European perspective, a company has a defining organizational reason-to-be that serves as a jumping-off point for maximizing profits, a repudiation of the idea that anything goes in the quest for a fast buck. A company needs to be built over time, as resources are husbanded, personnel are groomed and trained, customers courted and innovation nurtured; its directors need to manage a complex set of trade-offs between the demands of shareholders and stakeholders, marketplace trends, the need to innovate and the engagement of employees. In this view, if only one voice counts—shareholders who want fast returns now—the company risks ruin.

The United States is vandalizing this conception of the company—once inherent in American capitalism—and is pulling down the structures that support innovation and productivity. It is Europeans who now invest more, sustaining a range of institutions that produce a highly skilled work force and a business-building culture. They may at first sight look like economic tortoises; in fact, they are set to overtake the American hare. High European unemployment, concentrated in Germany, which has made massive mistakes in macroeconomic policy by fixing its exchange rate too high within the euro, disguises the real performance of the European economy: Unemployment is lower in seven European Union countries than in the United States, and on the continent as a whole the participation rate of 25-to-54-year-old men in the labor market is almost the same as in the United States. As the euro becomes embedded, Europeans will

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secure the advantage of a single continental market even larger than the United States; when they get their macroeconomic policy right, the advantages of their economic and social model will become more evident.

This economic strength pays for a social contract that offers most individual Europeans opportunity, mobility and security that is beyond the compass of most ordinary Americans. For here is another uncomfortable truth. American social mobility, traditionally comparable to Europe's, is falling as decades of tax cuts and spending cuts undermine the opportunities for advancement.

The chief culprit is the emergence of a highly stratified, increasingly class-based university system, whose very accessibility was once one of America's glories. The academic excellence of top US universities is not in question, but it is unclear whether they still contribute as they once did to equal opportunity and social mobility. For American universities have become very expensive. The competition to attract the world's best academic talent and fund cutting-edge research has meant an explosion of costs and a parallel explosion in tuition fees. For the private universities—and all but one of the top twenty are private—annual tuition, even before living expenses, tops $17,600. The rates are similar for the top law and business schools. Even public university tuition now averages more than $7,000 per year.

The conservative defense is that rich endowments allow private universities to practice "need blind" admission and offer students whose families cannot afford the cost a mix of grants, loans and work-study that together will see them through college. The same principle is meant to apply to public universities. Universities may be getting more expensive, so the mantra goes, but there is sufficient support to help the poorest. Equality of opportunity survives.

It is a lie. Endowment income is not matching the rise in tuition—now set to go substantially higher in public universities as states struggle to balance their budgets. At the same time, the Federal Pell Grant has been pared back by successive administrations in a conservative climate hostile to sustaining such "social" expenditures. With fewer grants, students have to incur huge loans to complete college, which unsurprisingly deters those from poorer homes. In 1979 children from the richest 25 percent of American homes were only four times more likely to go to college than those from the poorest 25 percent of homes; by 1994 they were ten times more likely. With the recent rise in tuition fees—up by a cool 20 percent on average since 2000—and further erosion of private and public grants, the divide can only have deepened.

University is becoming the preserve of the better-off in the United States to a degree unparalleled in the rest of the industrialized West, with attendance at the elite colleges, law and business schools—which serve as passports to the upper echelons of American life—increasingly restricted to the sons and daughters of the very rich. A new aristocracy is emerging in a country whose original ambition was to prevent such a phenomenon from ever taking place. It was only in Old Europe that status, opportunity and life chances were determined by accident of birth. Twenty-five years of conservative economic

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and social policies are burying that American dream.

The constricting access to university for students of middle- and low-income homes is remarkably underreported in the American media, as is the consequent impact on social mobility. The blithe assumption remains that opportunity in the United States is unparalleled. It is not. At the primary and secondary levels, public schools, profoundly underfunded, are a second-class system compared with private schools. Students in public schools are less likely to complete their courses, and achieve poorer grades when they do. But for the beleaguered community-college system, the United States has no formal means of giving extensive vocational and apprentice training. The combination of high dropout rates, gaps in the system, sheer lack of capacity and indifferent standards means that an astonishing 31 percent of American 18-year-old dropouts receive no vocational or other formal training after leaving school. In Germany, by contrast, that proportion is 1 percent.

Thus the children of poor and middle-income families are doubly victims. They are less likely to go to a top-ranked university, and they are more likely to enter the labor market with no qualifications. It should be no surprise, therefore, to find that 24.9 percent of American children live in poverty, while the proportions in Germany, France and Italy are 8.6, 7.4 and 10.5 percent. And once born on the wrong side of the tracks, Americans are more likely to stay there than their counterparts in Europe. Those born to better-off families are more likely to stay better off. America is developing an aristocracy of the rich and a serfdom of the poor—the inevitable result of a twenty-year erosion of its social contract.

America, in the grip of conservative dominance, is undermining not only the well-being of its citizens but its capacity to create wealth.

Philosophically, culturally and practically, the social contract has been attacked head-on and undermined at every turn; its destruction has been one of the great objectives of the renaissance of American conservatism. As a result, its supports have been increasingly eroded. If there is to be what political philosopher John Rawls calls an infrastructure of justice—one insuring that everyone, despite any accident of birth, gets a chance to develop his or her talents, participate in the life of society, exercise liberties and enjoy basic living standards—then a system must be in place to maintain it. And that system is of necessity the state, with its ability to tax and spend. In this conception, the state is not a coercive interloper but a trustee of social fairness, providing the foundation for any society's long-term social health and wealth.

Yet since the mid-1970s taxation has been depicted by the right as a coercive intrusion upon individual liberty imposed by an oppressive government. Grants to poor students, for example, are seen as wasteful subsidies that undercut self-reliance and the robust qualities of independence that the early settlers possessed and upon which America was built. Yet America's social contract, hewn out of searing experiences like the Depression and bolstered by respect for the Constitution's claim that citizens should have equal opportunity, requires that the state act as its trustee—with the tax revenue to pay for it. To attack taxation as a moral evil and economic drag, and the state as oppressive and inefficient, is to knock away the key underpinnings of the social contract.

There is no need to recite details of the consequences: lower life expectancy than in Europe, vicious inequality and desperate lack of social mobility. Yes, it is true that the European social contract can produce perverse incentives, so that, say, excessively generous unemployment benefits in Germany undermine individuals' desire to look for and accept work. But the solution is to reform the excessive generosity, as German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder is doing, rather than abandon the social contract altogether. The impact of America's approach on individual lives shows up in international surveys of happiness and sense of well-being, where Americans score so badly. An obsessive individualism in a society in which so many are harmed eats away at the capacity to empathize, and the very stuff of human association is undermined. A Hobbesian society, a war of all against all, is not an environment in which human beings can flower.

It also pollutes the economy, despite claims to the contrary. America is richer than Europe not because it works smart but because it works long. Americans work, on average, 300 hours more a year than people in Britain, France and Germany, a sixth more American women work than European women, more American old people are at work and fewer young Americans get to study. Americans have to work this hard because their productivity at work tends to be lower than in Europe, and that is because American companies tend to innovate and invest less; the injunction is to sweat assets rather than be creative.

The values that underpin a social contract—fairness, a belief in opportunity for all and respect for human potential—are precisely those that underpin a successful company. Great visionary companies inspire their work forces and enlist their energy, and that cannot be done when human values are subordinated to the enrichment of a few at the top. Equally, the institutions of a social contract—great public schools, universities and hospitals; codes of quality corporate governance; great transportation; affordable housing for all—are the same institutions that support long-term wealth generation. America, in the grip of conservative dominance, is undermining not only the well-being of its citizens but its capacity to create national wealth and economic growth.

To this Englishman, it is extraordinary that the American liberal tradition has given up so much ground to the resurgent American right. The evidence does not exist to support the conservatives' case. Moreover, translated into international relations, the same doctrine has had baleful results. Pre-emptive unilateralism and the militarization of foreign policy—a transfer of the dog-eat-dog model to international relations—is undermining the rule of international law and leaving America to assume ever more expensive burdens without even achieving the results it wants. Iraq is turning into a quagmire, while terrorist networks are still at large. At home and abroad, America's overconfident conservatives have led the nation into a cul-de-sac. It is time to say so—and loudly. ■

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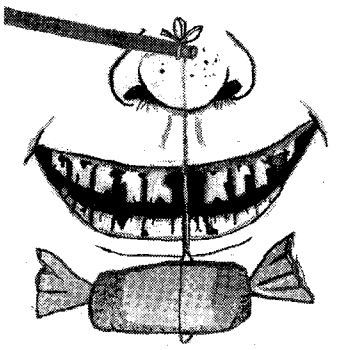
ACTIVISTS ACROSS AMERICA ARE CONTESTING CORPORATE GIVEAWAYS—AND WINNING.

Money for Nothing

BOBBI MURRAY

what WORKS

This article is part of our "What Works" series, which explores effective strategies for improving people's lives through progressive social change. —The Editors



KAREN CALDICOTT

It was the dream of economic development that inspired officials in Caledonia, Minnesota, to give a Dairy Queen franchise a $275,000 tax subsidy in 1996. One problem: The largesse created exactly one job, at $4.50 an hour. The return on public investment wasn't much better in Pennsylvania a year later when the state—led by then-Governor Tom Ridge—and the City of Philadelphia ponied up $307 million worth of incentives to persuade Kvaerner ASA, a Norwegian global construction company, to reopen a section of Philadelphia's moribund shipyard. That created 950 jobs that paid around $50,000 a year—not bad, until you calculate the cost to taxpayers: $323,000 per job.

Mercedes-Benz cadged $253 million in state and local incentives in 1993 to build a plant near Tuscaloosa, Alabama. The school in the adjacent small town of Vance lacks the funding to add permanent classrooms to meet capacity, while Mercedes employees enjoy a $30 million training center built at taxpayer expense. The jobs created cost the public $168,000 each.

Despite such boondoggles, it's been accepted as nothing less than gospel that public bodies must give out subsidies to private companies to fuel economic growth. State and municipal leaders dished out an estimated $48.8 billion in subsidies, tax breaks and other incentives to corporations in 1996, the last time the figure was calculated; a more recent figure would likely top $50 billion, says Greg LeRoy, founder of the Washington, DC–based Good Jobs First and author of *No More Candy Store: States and Cities Making Job Subsidies Accountable*.

The amount of money is even more mind-boggling in light of the fact that much of it is given away no strings attached—without any explicit agreement regarding the numbers and quality of jobs created, or even guidelines on environmental and community impact. "The stuff that corporations call economic development is pretty shabby if you kick the tires," LeRoy says.

In the quest for economic development, states and regions lower their expectations on adherence to environmental regulations and what kinds of jobs are created, frantically bidding each other up beyond the limits of reason. Municipalities in Tennessee, Alabama, Arkansas and Mississippi competed for a Toyota plant last year with incentive packages as high as $500 million. Some of the alluring offers included free land and the naming rights for a sports stadium.

In 1998, then–New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani championed what may be the biggest subsidy package ever—$1.4 billion in enticements to retain the New York Stock Exchange in Manhattan after NYSE officials made noises about moving to New Jersey. That state's Business Employment Incentive Program had successfully lured such big names as Goldman Sachs, Merrill Lynch and JP Morgan from New York City by offering a total of $710 million in inducements over six years.

The taxpayer's tab on the NYSE deal included a $450 million land purchase, $480 million in cash and $160 million in tax incentives. The NYSE plan eventually unraveled and was declared dead this past February, though taxpayers were still in for an estimated $109 million—just to bail out.

Surprisingly, Giuliani's successor, Michael Bloomberg, founder of capital's town crier, *Bloomberg News*, stood firm against the NYSE decampment threat and has generally been less than enthused about the notion of dishing out money to retain companies in Manhattan. Before being elected he said, "Any company that makes a decision as to where they are going to be based on the tax rate is a company that won't be around very long."

Nevertheless, after 9/11, the public paid out some eye-popping sums to retain companies in lower Manhattan. The Bank of New York got some $40 million, while American Express, whose building is adjacent to the World Trade Center site, got $25 million, even after company leaders had already elected to stay.

The money came from $2.7 billion in community development grants administered by the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation, a city/state collaboration that has already doled out some $1 billion to businesses affected by the attacks, including corporate giants. The Labor Community Advocacy Network to Rebuild New York (LCAN), a coalition of more than fifty unions, community organizations and environmental-justice groups, estimates that the terror attacks cost New York 80,000 to 100,000 jobs. LCAN representatives have been lobbying hard for the remaining $1.2 billion to be used to create 25,000 fully subsidized public-service jobs and 35,000 partially subsidized private-sector jobs.

Good Jobs New York (an affiliate of LeRoy's Good Jobs First) and LCAN have only begun to insert themselves into New York's subsidy debate, but their efforts are emblematic of a national movement that's grown up over the past decade to contest corporate welfare, push back-room deals into the light and attach strings to public economic development dollars. Hundreds of activists gathered in July 2000 in Baltimore to share strategies at a first-ever conference of its kind; in November, Good Jobs First and other leading accountability activists will join labor allies in Milwaukee to press these issues at the annual gathering of the AFL-CIO's Working for America Institute.

Bobbi Murray lives in Los Angeles and writes frequently on economic justice issues. She is a 2002–03 criminal justice fellow at the USC Annenberg School for Communication Institute for Justice and Journalism.

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Activists call it a movement for "accountable economic development," a phrase that doesn't begin to describe the dynamic range of political work going on, from a campaign in California to limit sprawl while bringing jobs and services to urban centers to a union lockout fight in Ohio, not to mention the widespread push to attach wage conditions to subsidy-based hires.

It's a sign of the times that few, if any, campaigns in the movement call for a subsidies cutoff. The role of government, under unflagging attack by the right for more than twenty years, has been increasingly supplanted by privatization, says Madeline Janis-Aparicio, co-founder and executive director of the Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy. Opposition to subsidies is simply not winnable in most places, she argues, but public monies used for development give grassroots groups a chance to wedge into the debate and shape it from the beginning, to assess what a community really wants and fight for it.

'We are the pro-growth alternative,' says a Los Angeles activist. 'If they want to get past the NIMBYs, they have to deal with us.'

Some development should be flatly opposed, she says. "There are times when a project is so bad, it should just be stopped in its tracks. Like Wal-Mart. It's a death star, killing all the local businesses." But in general she believes—as does the accountability movement as a whole—in a strategy of engagement. "Public investment is sometimes really needed in blighted communities," she says. "We need the right kind." To oppose all subsidies, she says, would be to "give up our place at the table."

For many organizations, the ground-floor fight is for information. Their battles center on local disclosure measures that require companies to reveal the figures on incentives received and jobs created. Public subsidies spew from so many spigots, it's often hard to identify all the sources and quantify the amount of public benefits any given company gets. The information provides the road map for subsequent accountability fights. Nine states now have some form of disclosure legislation that covers one or more subsidy programs.

The Minnesota Alliance for Progressive Action (MAPA), a coalition of twenty-eight organizations, pushed through the first and toughest disclosure law in 1995, which was subsequently strengthened even further. Minnesota's laws require public hearings that expose the details of subsidy agreements and provide an opening for demanding living-wage rules or other provisions. Beneficiary companies must make public their job-creation goals and wage structures, while the government body offering the subsidy has to report the amount and types of incentives it hands over. "We've got them on record if they're getting a bunch of money and giving nothing," says MAPA executive director Scott Cooper. MAPA is now working with organizations in North Dakota, Wisconsin and Iowa on crafting parallel disclosure legislation.

Stakes were high and the struggle grueling in Ohio three years ago, when an annual tax abatement to AK Steel became the target of a Steelworkers local. The county and city had granted AK Steel in Mansfield a $1.7 million annual tax abatement since 1993; in 1995 the local governments even lowered the hiring requirement from 1,140 workers to 700 and the payroll minimum from $49.3 million to $32.5 million.

So after AK Steel charged its 620 union workers with misconduct and locked them out, "The only way we could generate some economic leverage was to go after their tax abatement," says Tony Montana, a spokesperson for the United Steelworkers of America. The union argued that since the lockout brought AK way below its promised worker and payroll levels, the subsidy was vulnerable.

Unionists first launched a campaign in the summer of 2000 in support of a measure, Issue 7, that got on the ballot due to the signature-collecting work of scores of grassroots activists. The measure wouldn't have directly affected AK Steel's subsidy, but it would have reordered the way Mansfield doled out incentives, setting certain requirements for local hiring, a living wage and disclosure. It was soundly trounced in November after the mayor, the City Council president and the Chamber of Commerce joined forces to raise a $250,000 war chest to fight it. "It's symptomatic of a problem on a national scale," Montana says. "The City Council was more interested in making Mansfield a friendly place for business than making businesses live up to their promises."

Then the union carried the fight to the moribund Tax Incentive Review Council of Richland County, which is charged with overseeing some 200 local subsidies—but which had no regular open meetings and conducted most business by phone. Unionists revived the board, packed meetings of the City Council and county commissions, took their case to the media—and won. They forced the review council to commit to annual public meetings, which now attract great public interest. And in March 2002, the council reviewed AK Steel's performance and cut its subsidy by a third. That December AK Steel ended the lockout.

"It was a long, nasty struggle," Montana says, "and it's still not fully resolved." But, as far as subsidy accountability goes, "if we were able to do it in Mansfield with a bunch of locked-out workers and zero budget, we should be able to do it anywhere."

For grassroots accountability organizing, California is the gold standard. There, a decade-old pathfinder, the Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy (LAANE), came up with a new accountability concept that has caught national attention in the movement: community benefits agreements. The agreements include job standards and more.

In 2001 LAANE leveraged $29 million in city subsidies to a mixed-use development in a struggling area of North Hollywood to win parks, a youth center and mitigation of problems caused by increased truck traffic. The developer also agreed to pay for fifty spots for low-income children at a planned childcare center and to provide free space for a community health clinic. A new grocery store will be required to sign a card-check neutrality agreement, making it easier for workers to organize, and 75 percent of the development's expected 2,000 retail and office jobs must be living wage. Finally, says Roxana Tynan, LAANE's director of accountable development, "the language around local hiring is the best and clearest that we have anywhere."

In three years, LAANE has negotiated a half-dozen such agreements, whose language is written directly into official city documents. For developers, says Tynan, "we are the pro-growth alternative. If they want to get past the NIMBYs they have to deal

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with us." Tynan says her hope is to take these individual victories and turn them into city policy.

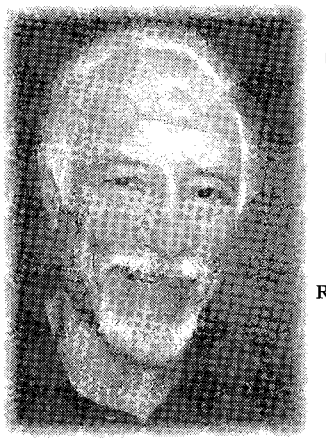
California's Silicon Valley, once famed for its cyber-millionaires, has also experienced a boom in low-paid and temporary workers. An accountability group there called Working Partnerships USA negotiated a community-benefits package last year that mandated affordable housing, park space and wage standards as part of a housing and retail development in downtown San Jose. Amy Dean, a former labor leader and founder of Working Partnerships, says that winning in San Jose meant linking up with environmentalists who oppose suburban sprawl in the valley but who can be persuaded to support development that provides decent jobs and services in the urban core, where they are needed. "Many of them share our values and understand that 'smart growth,' absent equity, is elitist," Dean says.

Another accountability group, the East Bay Alliance for a Sustainable Economy (EBASE), won a ballot measure in March 2002 that set wage and other labor standards for jobs generated by the $1.9 billion expansion of the Oakland Port and airport. In San Diego, the Center for Policy Initiatives—at five years old, the youngest of California's accountability organizations—is laying the groundwork to challenge the city's head-snapping pace of subsidy approval.

Three years ago the four organizations formed a statewide alliance, the California Partnership for Working Families, with an eye toward pushing statewide policy initiatives. With four strong groups in key locations, the partnership offers the best hope yet for regional "no raid" agreements that will really stick. That would be groundbreaking. A few regions have attempted them before, Greg LeRoy says, citing one between New York, New Jersey and Connecticut in the early 1990s. "But they never really took," he says. "They had no binding authority—the minute a company would play one off against the other, they'd fall apart."

But each of the four groups in the California Partnership has developed what Amy Dean calls "a deep and rich base," built through scoring local wins. They all integrate research with organizing, which allows them to employ diverse tactics: generating large turnouts to hearings and actions and providing expert testimony based on a nuanced understanding of arcane development mechanisms.

Nationally, economic stress may create new openings for organizers. The current crisis in state budgets, the worst since the Great Depression, was certainly helped along by what LeRoy calls "subsidies enacted during the drunken-sailor binge of the late '90s." But fiscal austerity is also encouraging many state governments to rethink their subsidy policies. New Jersey, the feared raider of New York City jobs, suspended its Business Employment Incentive Program in February because of the state's budget crunch. The former Governor of Alabama, Don Siegelman, once an ardent proponent of corporate incentives, became an anti-subsidy crusader by the end of his term. State tax revenues from corporations in Alabama dropped by nearly half in 2001; 619 companies in the state paid no taxes at all in 2000, the result of past cut-throat incentives negotiations. Siegelman began barnstorming churches and unions, attacking corporate tax dodgers, calling them "Enrons and WorldComs."



Can You Make A Difference?

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ROBERT J. SCHWARTZ, PH.D.

Foreword by John Kenneth Galbraith

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Growing up with a strong social conscience, Robert J. Schwartz has dedicated all of his life to trying to build a more just, peaceful, democratic, and habitable world. He helped establish the American Veterans Committee, Peace Action (formerly SANE), Wall Street Executives Against the War, Socially Responsible Investments, and Economists Allied for Arms Reduction (ECAAR). We urge the readers of the *Nation* to join us in ending Bush's wars and his damaging economic and political policies. Contact us at www.ecaar.org.

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An interesting connection. Even if most Americans are not aware that subsidy shakedowns debilitate local budgets, they do know the names of the corporate buccaneers who have wrecked retirement plans and kicked the slats out of an already wobbly economy. An agile accountability movement, able to leverage community benefits from economic development incentives—or block them, as the situation demands—has the potential to take advantage of this political opportunity, bringing a skeptical focus to local development and opening the lens to reveal the bigger picture as well. ■

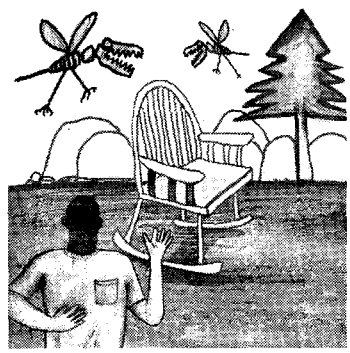
MAINE HAS A BEAUTIFUL, ENDLESSLY EXPLORABLE COASTLINE, ALONG A CLEAN, COLD SEA.

'The Way Life Should Be'

JANWILLEM VAN DE WETERING

THESE UNITED STATES

In the 1920s The Nation *published a series of articles by prominent writers about their home states. We have commissioned a number of contemporary writers to do the same. This is the fourth in the series, which will be published by Nation Books in November. —The Editors*



KAREN CALDICOTT

Maine is big, and has a long coastline. I mostly know about the coastline, where I live. There were, in the almost thirty years I have enjoyed life here, a few expeditions inland, cross-state to Montreal and Quebec City and New Brunswick. Bad roads, strange people, some holding shotguns, not loaded but broken open, and as I drove by the strange people kept one hand in one pocket, no doubt holding some perfectly good shells. I drove into a gas station and nobody came out to pump—yes, a regular pump, with a glass cylinder filled with orange-colored gas and a handle. I went in and there were strange people, one in a wheelchair. I said I needed gas and the person in the wheelchair asked why. Someone locked the door behind me and we sat around for a while, looking at each other. "I am from away," I said, and a hairy person said, "No kidding." Were they going to rob me? After killing me, of course? Any torture? Did I care?

I remembered my coastal neighbor, a gnarled man named Jezz, leaning down from the antique that he says is a tractor, after I shouted up that there was a dead raccoon in my pond. "In Maine, if you don't care," Jezz shouted, "it don't matter."

"Do I care?" I asked the wheelchair person.

"Kingdom come," he answered. Or maybe she answered. The person's voice was high but came from a hole within a stubble. The person and the other strange people bowed their heads and spoke in tongues. So did I.

"You praying too?" a hairy man asked from behind a counter stacked with sardine cans from long ago. "Sure as hell I'm praying," I said. The atmosphere lightened. "OK," the wheelchair person said. The store's door got unlocked. Ten dollars' worth of gas got pumped. I handed over two fives. "Covers it just barely," the hairy man said. Nobody shot me as I drove off.

Janwillem van de Wetering is the author of a series of police procedurals set in Amsterdam and books on Zen.

So much for inland Maine. Stephen King has a camp in inland Maine. There's also the bright side.

MAINE: THE WAY LIFE SHOULD BE, the sign says just after you cross into the state, from down south, or allthemotherstates, as Mainers define the rest of the country, where life is not the way it is supposed to be. Don't you like that? I do, not so much because of its blatant arrogance, although there's that too, but because of the pleasant emptiness that starts behind the sign. Traffic begins to thin down just about at that waypoint. That's where home starts. "I'm home," I say to whoever is in the car with me. There's another good sign a hundred miles up the road: BE ALERT, THINK OF BERT. Bert who? Who cares Bert who? Bert wasn't alert. He didn't live to enjoy the Maine coast, much longer than the 250 miles the schoolbook has it. More like 3,500 miles long, because of all the necks, coves, peninsulas, islands with bars that come up at low tide.

You know there are two types of Mainers? There are Mainers and there are From Aways. I'm a From Away. I have only lived here thirty years. If I had born-here kids they would be From Aways too. From Aways are stupid.

Like Alex, who wandered in, late 1960s, as a hippie-cum-flower-child-cum-homemade-Buddhist. For a day job he walked a chihuahua. The dog belonged to an old lady. This story is set in Bar Harbor. The "bar" in Bar Island is a stroke of glistening, solid-looking gravel visible at low tide. It connects to an island. Alex walked Chi along the bar to the island that's mostly part of Acadia National Park. Alex, strolling along behind the hairy house mouse, got tired. He sat down and fell asleep. When sudden rain woke him the bar was gone and didn't return until many hours later. Chi dragged Alex home then, to a lack of welcome.

A beautiful coastline we have here, along a clean, cold sea, dotted with the heads of seals, loons (an endangered species of large diving birds), eider ducks and gulls. One is tempted to go boating. "Mind you always know exactly where you are," Jezz, my neighbor, after selling me his wooden sailboat, mumbled. Others confirmed the hint. Keep your finger on the chart. Check your instruments. Name the passing islands. Watch your depth. Know your weather. Even Mainers get lost here. The ocean isn't known to forgive too much foolishness. Lobstermen, out of fuel

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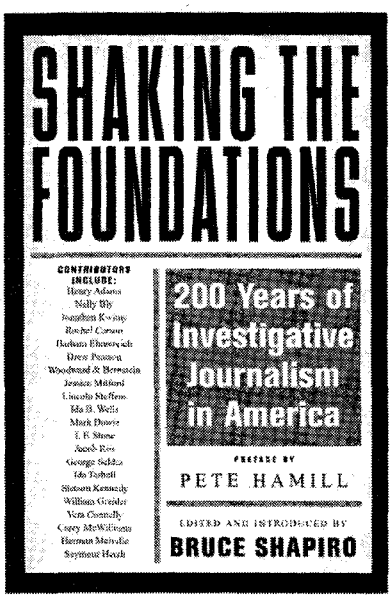

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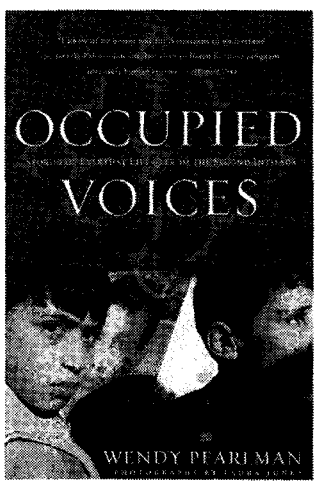

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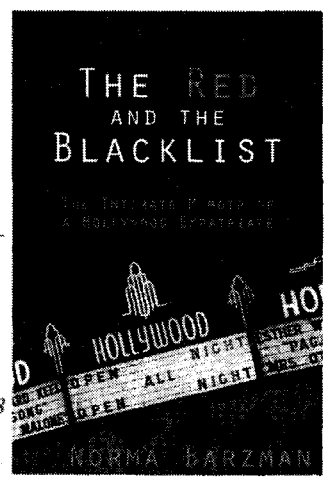

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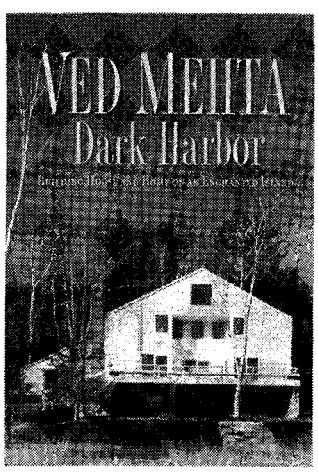

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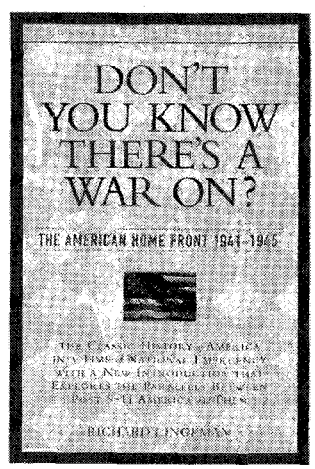

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and without their cell phones, drift out forever. Scallop draggers with their iron-bottom scrapers hoisted up too high turn over and sink in 300-foot-deep seas. A cargo boat, loaded with sardines, rips her bottom on a razor-sharp ledge, loses her crew and feeds happy mammals and birds.

Always stay in contact.

"How are you doing?" my wife's voice says in the phone, and I say, "I'm at Little Duck, the sea is like glass, watching gray seals diving near orange granite rocks. The seals aren't gray, they're sparkling green." "It's blowing hard here," she says. "Better find a harbor. See you alive tomorrow." Another Maine aspect. Different locations, different weather, no matter if the locations are less than ten miles apart. Various climatic zones cut into each other here, so you never know what's what and what will be what and on behalf of what. There's the cat's-paw, a sudden blast of wind directed straight at your puny vessel as she putters along on a hardly moving sea, calm enough right now, but the paw, coming from the next cloud, has claws, and likes to topple the unwary.

Maybe that's why the open sea can be empty on a good day in the midst of the holiday season. Harbors like Camden, Rockport, North East and South West harbors, Bar Harbor itself of course, Eastport on the Canadian border, and all the southern ports I can't remember the names of don't send out their million-dollar yachts too far. Directors, executives, brokers, takeover artists prefer picnicking in safe coves, their splendid Maine-made vessels tied to sturdy moorings, with the kids buttoned up in their life jackets and the chef cooking in the cabin, the wife watching TV down below, and the mistress up on the bow, one magnificent leg up at a 90-degree angle, one magnificent leg stretched out.

There are two types here: Mainers and From Aways. I'm a From Away. I have only lived here thirty years. From Aways are stupid.

The dot that shows up in my binoculars, far out in the east, slowly approaching, most likely will turn out to be a foreign sailboat. I was out in the bay at midnight once, rowing my cedar dinghy under a full moon, when I was hailed by the skipper of a weather-beaten fifty-foot vessel that said AUCKLAND, NEW ZEALAND on the transom. Yachtsman wanted to know where he could have the girls dig clams for breakfast. Invited on board, I got introduced. The man had been a banker. Looking ahead one day and seeing nothing but repeats, he sold out to his partners, bought the old two-master and wanted to sail to nowhere, possibly forever. But he knew he could never handle the boat alone, and that's when tourist Swiss sisters smiled down from the quay. That was years ago. The girls were older now.

A flat-bottomed boat, kept steady by huge oval sideboards, that showed up at my dock last summer, asking for drinking water, came from Hamburg. The crew, after covering their technology shorts at huge profits, were aiming, after exploring the Maine coast, to go around Cape Horn, then settle in the Marquesas. "Where Gauguin lived, you mean?" "*Jawohl*," they said. They were going to paint too, and their wives believed in weaving. They talked about palm fronds.

Maine adventures. There's bear hunting, ridge running, coyote trapping (but coyotes have two litters a year, and they're smart), otter watching (one visits my pond and barks happily when it sees me). There are turkeys between the sweet fern now. I got used to seeing four eagles at a time, and up to a dozen ospreys, but the turkeys are new. My Internet sources say American turkeys were extinct but were reintroduced from Spain, via offspring of genuine USA wild turkeys that some conquering don took home. Whaddayaknow! Wild local turkeys defy my dog, calmly hop-march around the outhouse as my guardian barks, snarls and drools.

Is this exciting country or what?

"Can't make money in Maine," Jezz tells new From Aways sniffing around for a shed on an acre.

I tell them that too. We have hardly any industry left. The last leather manufacturer in Bangor surrendered to China recently. The L.L. Bean sportsman catalogue, even when preferring to buy locally, adds more and more import products. The boat-builders, sure, but commercial fishing licenses are hard to come by, and the government buys fishing boats to take them out of production. The Maine-built multimillion-dollar yachts have a limited, possibly shrinking, market. So what do you do down here? Let's keep down the population.

"Still some room here," the new From Aways say.

"Tough climate," I say.

"If you must face the climate," Jezz says, "please bring your own money."

So that would be the retired crowd, which, by its very nature, tends to die out on its service providers. It gets quiet here in winter. "All by your lonesome," Jezz says. "And for the summer we have the black flies, oh, aren't them little pests wicked. Them don't sting, you know, they tear a piece off. Can hear them chomping as they fly home to tell the others. Bug spray? Hah." He whispers: "Cancerous poison."

I nod. "And there are little bugs too. Indians call them no-see-ums. Big biters. And deer flies—ferocious, zoom around your head when you try swimming in our cold, cold waters."

"There are them skeeters too," Jezz says.

"Dengue," I say. "High fever, unbearable muscle ache."

"Ticks," Jezz says. "Lyme disease we have now. That's a killer. Better cover up when you wander into them woods. This ain't no hot-pants country."

I mention the hippie horse farm that closed down because the horses froze. It was forty below.

"So why do you live here?" the newcomers ask.

True. I work and communicate with a PC. I could do that anywhere, as my brother pointed out while visiting briefly, experiencing rain, drizzle and fog. If he had stayed I could have rowed him out of the cove to watch the sun set behind Blue Hill, driven him up Cadillac Mountain on Mount Desert Island to be breathless while taking in panoramic views, showed him finback whales, the largest creatures ever to live on this planet, not thirty feet from the boat, taken him past miles of glowing blueberry fields, bought him a lobster roll for lunch. We could have walked with white-tailed deer on Swans Island, eaten home-baked ice-cream pie on neighboring Frenchboro with its hidden safe harbor. There are the mysterious swamplands in spring (or any season) off

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Route 69; there is the empty Interstate 95, perfect pavement, park-like ever-wide shoulders all the way to Canada and back. We could have flown to the inland lakes in a seaplane.

"The weather!" he said.

Sure we have weather. So we wait till it changes. Nobody has to camp out in the rain. We have houses here. Hot showers. Clean water that comes out of the well for free. Organic food grown on idealistic farms. Hormone-free meat. Aqua-culture salads grow in a factory across the road. Salmon grow in pens in the bay. Soon there will be haddock too. Lobster eggs, no longer eaten by the almost-extinct cod, produce good harvests. The state adapts.

"Taxes are high."

Very, I agree. So don't live here. So as not to pay high taxes.

"Hawaii," my brother said. "Go live in Hawaii."

Yes, I've been there. Hawaii, especially the big island, is heaven.

"You don't want to live in heaven?"

Nah. Maine is close to Europe, my old stomping grounds, six hours out of Boston, five hours out of Bangor if you can fly with the lobsters on the Xmas jumbo-cargo. New York is very close, and there's a train out of Portland now. Nice train. Montreal, I've been there for lunch, in a neighbor's plane.

Isn't that frightening? Soon the From Aways will invade us. The climate is changing. Snowmobiles were useless the past few mild winters. Florida birds are coming in for the summer; I saw a giant egret in the cove yesterday. Vultures are common now, even in winter. A cardinal is singing as I write.

Up north, however, winters are still tough. I've been looking at maps. There are snowmobile trails there, into infinity and beyond (beyond being Canada). Looking down during the plane ride to lunch in Montreal, there was the vast forest. True, there were nasty beetlelike machines scratching part of it away, but I read about paper-factory promises to replant the clearcuts. All-terrain vehicles can manage the snowmobile trails in summer. What grown-up boy wouldn't like to try that, dressed up as a space character in leather, helmet, gloves. "You're against Jet-Skis too," my wife says. Yes, when other folks ride them. Jezz says he'll come along as soon as I get one. As long as it's mine, Jezz says, for he is against From Away foolishness. Although, as long as you don't care, it don't matter.

And yes, he helped get rid of the dead raccoon fouling the pond. As for the strange inland folks, they did let me go. Good people (whether you get to know them or not); pristine, exotic, endlessly explorable coast. Great state all over. But please, let's keep that quiet. "There's taxes," Jezz says. "There's bugs," I say. "There's weather," all of us say. Can't make money in Maine. But then, can't spend it too easily either. ■

LETTERS
CONTINUED

(Continued From Page 2)

your local radio stations, and America Radio will send demo tapes with the hope that local stations will pick up these progressive voices.

CHRIS KELLEY

Key Largo, Fla.

■ Eric Alterman and your readers should know of two radio talk-shows by liberals that are great ratings successes. First is *The Randi Rhodes Show* on WJNO in Palm Beach. This wonderful, Democratic, brash woman (we fans call her "The Goddess") destroys conservatives on a daily basis between 3 PM and 7 PM. Unlike Rush, she doesn't screen her calls to try to keep people who disagree with her off the air. She relishes shredding their diatribes with facts that leave them no base to stand on. She follows Rush and gets ratings that are many times his.

Another is Neil Rogers on WQAM in Miami. The self-proclaimed "queen of talk radio" gets better ratings than most TV stations in Miami. "Neil God" has been targeted by Fox News for his bashing of W and the gang, including Condoleezza Rice. He is on air from 10 AM to 2 PM. Both of these extremely entertaining personalities can be listened to on the Internet.

RICK JENNINGS

Nashville

■ Low-power FM in the right hands is what the progressive community needs. We have been struggling to get a low-power FM license for five years. If this comes to pass, Music City USA will have a truly progressive voice: Radio Free Nashville. Talk about grassroots—we are the soil in which this community (progressive, Latino, black, Kurdish, Asian, etc.) can grow. We just had some high schoolers do a benefit that brought in some money to help us on our journey, because these kids know that they have no interest in what is going out over the airwaves and they want and deserve a voice.

GREG J. WELSCH
Radio Free Nashville

P.S. I am tired of watching Clear Channel intimidate artists and buy up every amphitheater we play. Just because L. Lowry Mays made W a millionaire, I don't think I should be forced to listen to the trashing of the Dixie Chicks every time I turn on the radio.

Greensboro, NC

■ It's hard to believe that Eric Alterman failed to mention Free Speech TV Network, available on the DISH Network satellite system. (I do not have the satellite system, but I have recently decided to cut down a couple of the big trees in my yard, at much expense, that block me from getting it.) I hope that thousands, even millions, take up the charge to convert their home TV viewing over to the DISH Network in order to get the FSTV channel 24/7. Imagine thousands of people simultaneously calling their cable systems or DIRECTV to cancel. We could all explain that we are simply wanting to get FSTV—as well as the attention of the current right-wing media cabal. Perhaps we can grow this young network into the progressive behemoth needed to slay the corporatists' multitude of remote-control dragons.

DAVID KEMP

New York City

■ Discussing liberal media as a much-needed antidote to the barrage of right-wing corporate media, Eric Alterman overlooked one very important progressive voice, WorldLink TV. Operating on a minuscule budget compared with other television networks, three-year-old WorldLink TV broadcasts 24/7 via satellite television (DIRECTV, channel 375 and DISH Network, channel 9410) into 20 million US homes—that means WorldLink is found in one out of every five American homes. We provide a steady diet of news and music programming from around the world. Our current affairs and investigative reports focus on peace and justice issues, human rights, women's rights, globalization and the environment. "Mosaic," our daily roundup of news from sixteen Middle Eastern broadcasters, shows Americans what 280 million Arabs watch daily on their television sets. To learn more about WorldLink TV, check out our website at www.worldlinktv.org.

JACK WILLIS
WorldLink TV

A-WOOOOOOOO

Auckland, New Zealand

■ Looks like Bush is the boy who cried Wolfowitz. Who's going to come to our aid when we really need it?

E.J. ODDI

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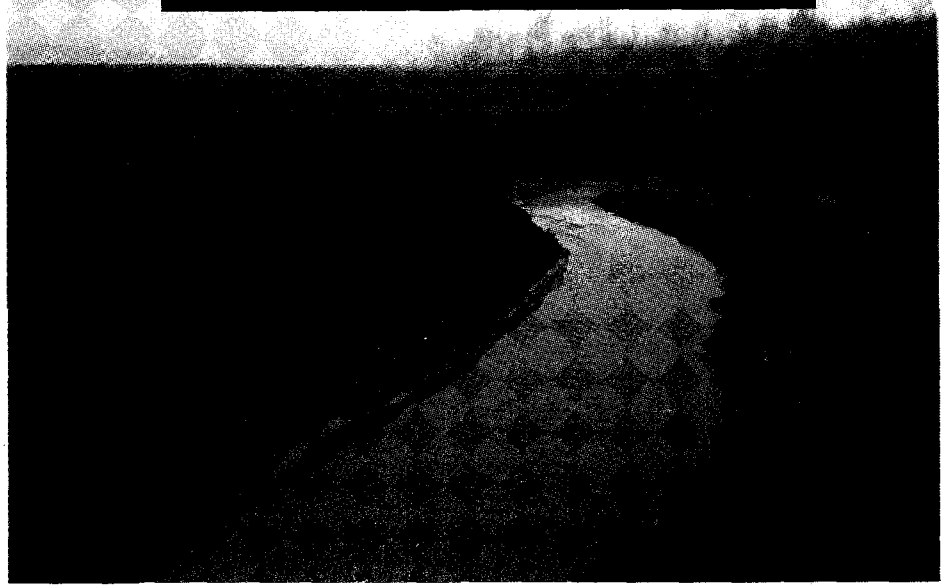

EDWARD BURTYNSKY, *NICKEL TAILINGS #34, SUDBURY ONTARIO* (DETAIL)

Creative Destruction

REBECCA SOLNIT

MANUFACTURED LANDSCAPES: The Photographs of Edward Burtynsky.
With essays by Lori Pauli, Mark Haworth-Booth and Kenneth Baker, and an interview by Michael Torosian.
National Gallery of Canada in association with Yale University Press.
160 pp. 64 full-page images. $55.

Edward Burtynsky's photographs are large, colorful and mostly ravishing, despite their subjects. They show seldom-seen industrial landscapes, the places from which resources come to us and to which they go when we're done with them: mines, oilfields, refineries, quarries, dumps. These places look inhuman, for their scale and for their poisons and hazards, but they're the landscapes on which most human beings now depend. It may be that industrial civilization is predicated on blindness and alienation, on not knowing that sweatshops or copper mines make your pleasant First World urban/suburban existence possible, for that knowledge would at the least make that existence less pleasant. Certainly most people nowadays would be hard pressed to say where their water comes from or their garbage goes to, let alone their tungsten or their oil tankers. Burtynsky photographs those places with an eye to their aesthetic power.

"Although he understands that modern technologies can have devastating effects on the earth and its ecosystems, he believes that it would be hypocritical of him to use his photographs as a diatribe against industry," writes Lori Pauli in one of the essays in *Manufactured Landscapes: The Photographs of Edward Burtynsky*. But such a statement seems to reflect an old model, in which to be a politically engaged artist you had to foreground your own outrage, engagement, virtue (and certainly ostentatious display of appropriate emotion is part of many performances all along the political spectrum). Facts themselves are political, since just to circulate the suppressed and obscured ones is a radical act. That, for example, an EPA official resigned because under Bush he wasn't allowed to enforce air quality regulations that would save far more lives than were lost on September 11 and that depleted-uranium armaments pose a threat to the health of US troops as well as Iraqis are stories that subvert the status quo and, not surprisingly, don't get heard much. Environmental facts can be loaded, and Burtynsky's certainly are. His photographs re-

Rebecca Solnit is the author, most recently, of River of Shadows: Eadweard Muybridge and the Technological Wild West *(Penguin).*

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EVENTS

NEW YORK

Beyond Iraq: The Impact Of the War on Terrorism

■ On lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities' civil liberties. Funding for social services. Profiling. Immigration. How have the wars with Afghanistan and Iraq affected our communities? What will the United States' ongoing war on terrorism mean for our country and for LGBT people? How can, or should, LGBT communities and organizations respond? Tuesday, September 9, 6–8:30 PM, LGBT Community Center, 208 W. 13th Street, New York City. Scheduled Speakers: Trishala Deb, The Audre Lorde Project; Richard Goldstein, executive editor, *Village Voice*; Amber Hollibaugh, author and activist; Reno, performance artist; Pradeep Singla, former legal director of the Lesbian and Gay Immigration Rights Task Force; Carmen Vazquez, author and activist; Kay Whitlock, American Friends Service Committee. Event sponsored by Queers for Economic Justice. For information, contact Joseph DeFilippis, (212) 234-5701.

Radical Walking Tour

■ Bruce Kayton will start his fall season of walking tours on Sunday, September 14, with the Greenwich Village I Tour, which includes the Weather Underground, John Reed, Emma Goldman, Angela Davis, Mabel Dodge, the IWW, Stonewall Riots of 1969, Provincetown Playhouse, Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire and more. For more information call (718) 492-0069 or see www.he.net/~radtours. Look for the new edition of Radical Walking Tours of New York City at a bookstore near you.

The advertising deadline for Events is every Thursday. Rates: $175 for 50 words; $225 for 75 words, additional words (above 75) $2.00 each. To place an ad, call Leigh at (212) 209-5414.

veal with plain-spoken, vivid force that the industrial civilization we have created depends for its existence, from its marble facades to the contents of its gas tanks, on this inhuman scale of desolation and poison that remains largely out of sight. That he chooses to pay attention to these places is already a form of engagement, and the questions a photographer raises may be more profound than the answers the medium permits.

An earlier generation of environmentalist landscape photographers, notably Eliot Porter and Ansel Adams, concentrated on ideal landscapes that came to seem in the end irrelevant, places that were fine because they had nothing to do with us, though these images were, and to a lesser extent still are, useful for conservation politics. In the past quarter-century most photographers have concentrated on some version of the social landscape, on inhabited wildernesses; dystopias; comic, disastrous and mystic engagements with place, land and nature. The three essays in *Manufactured Landscapes* do what essays in handsome books about artists usually try to do: establish their place in the grand narrative of the history of art.

But the Canadian Burtynsky is more interesting for his divergences from the tradition of American landscape photography. He tells of the incident that launched his current work, a wrong turn that took him to the mining wasteland of Frackville, Pennsylvania, where "in that entire horizon there was nothing virgin. It totally destabilized me. I thought, is this earth? I had never seen anything transformed on this scale.... The pictures I took in Frackville sat as contacts for almost a year. I kept looking at them and then I realized, this is what I have to do.... All the things we inhabit, and all the things we possess, the material world that we surround ourselves with, all comes from nature." And this is what nature looks like when we wring our material world out of it: luridly red-orange rivers of water saturated with oxidized iron at a nickel quarry, a tire dump whose millions of black donuts become canyons and crevasses and mountains.

Among Burtynsky's most interesting subjects are marble and granite quarries, the voids in the unseen landscape from which buildings, particularly civic and corporate ones, are extracted (the critic Lucy Lippard has described these as the holes left in rural spaces to create urban erections). These are vertiginous, precarious terrains in which human beings and even their stoneworking machines are tiny. The geometry of architecture is already present in the horizontal and vertical lines and ledges carved into the walls and amphitheaters of stone. The stone is almost monochromatic, but the red and orange equipment in Carrara or a jade-green lake at the bottom of a Vermont quarry and a few yellow aspens on a ledge midway up give scale and relief to the monotony. They also heighten the Piranesi-like terror of these cliffs and abysses.

The photographer Burtynsky most resembles is the Californian Richard Misrach, who also makes breathtaking large color images of overlooked and sequestered places. Military sites in the desert Southwest have been Misrach's definitive subject, from the abandoned Enola Gay bunker and sheds in Utah to the ammunition-storage berms, bombing ranges and radioactive landscapes of Nevada. A dozen or more years ago, this work was greeted with outrage for "aestheticizing evil"; viewers seemed to want a world in which only the good was beautiful and seductive, and blamed Misrach for the challenges sublime and fascinating evils pose. Misrach was always more interested in testing this kind of tension, and his work differs from Burtynsky's in its interest in conceptual and philosophical questions—notably the photographic representation of what can't be seen—and in its tendency to come up with images that have the skies and spaciousness of traditional landscape. (Burtynsky often lets the stuff that is his subject fill the frame, to the exclusion of deep space, horizons and other standard equipment of landscape imagery, but he chooses to represent that stuff and its sites as landscape rather than as labor documentary; his images are seldom populated.) Our culture seems to have grown more sophisticated about the beauty/virtue schisms since Misrach's bombscapes, but Burtynsky isn't interested in pushing the contradictions and the politics of representation in the same way. He's a more straightforward documentarian, though his work is hardly in the documentary mode, at least not in the mode in which a certain aesthetic and emotional remove—including a remove from the sensuality of the world—is part of the equipment. For Burtynsky's images are beautiful, or rather, like Misrach's sublime, of the same visually compelling order as forest fires, wartime ruins, floods and other spectacles.

Nowhere are they more so than in his photographs of shipbreaking. These, mostly made in Chittagong, Bangladesh, show the half-dismantled hulks of cargo ships and oil tankers on beaches, huge fragments over which men scramble like ants (apparently, though this is nowhere evident in the images), dismantling them with little more

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than blowtorches. Often taken in raking light or fog, these photographs depict colossal shards standing up at intervals from dramatic foreground to deep background, the most conventionally landscapelike of Burtynsky's images (though some also show a facade that fills the image area and approaches abstraction). They are reports back from an unseen world—who in the First World ever thought much about oil tanker recycling?—in which our daily lives are embedded. But they seem almost allegorical—antlike men fragmenting the colossi that are the only relief to that vast, flat expanse.

Although Burtynsky is no advocate, he cares, like Misrach, about his subject matter. This sets him apart from the other photographer he resembles, the much lionized Andreas Gursky (born, like Burtynsky, in 1955). Gursky specializes in huge prints in which antlike human beings seem to inhabit a world—of arena concerts, ski areas, the tiered balconies of hotel lobbies—that we mostly do know (though he too photographed a landfill), and whose alienating and inhuman scale we know better through his images. But Gursky is, comparatively, a formalist, interested in digital manipulation and questions about scale and representation. His commitment is not to the subject.

Burtynsky is starting to approach something that photography could have pursued all along, and maybe did once or twice in the era of the *Life* photo essay: an inspection of systems rather than places. His oilfields, oil refineries, tire dumps, oil pipelines and dismantled tankers begin to get at the cycle of oil, nasty at every turn even without politics and wars. They aren't presented that way in the book, but they come together that way in the imagination. A genuinely ecological photography might pursue something along those lines, tracing the life of a commodity from extraction to disposal (Burtynsky's pale uranium mine site with its dead trees invites this line of investigation, raising as it does the specter of bombs and power plants and nuclear waste disposal). Or it might address what photography has mostly been unwilling to acknowledge: So toxic is the medium itself that Kodak in Rochester—not far from Burtynsky's Ontario home—is New York State's number-one polluter, cranking out enough dioxin, along with two and a half million pounds of airborne methylene chloride, to cause more than half a billion cancer deaths in a typical year. This could be why a really thoughtful photographer feels that it would be "hypocritical" to use his photographs as a diatribe against industry. ■

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PHOTOGRAPHY

Space Is the Place

GEOFF DYER

I recently returned to dingy England after a road trip in America, where, as usual, I failed to take any photographs. I did, however, take the poet Charles Olson's *Call Me Ishmael*, which opens with his famous declaration about America: "I take SPACE to be the central fact." With this in mind I thought it would be revealing and appropriate to look at how people who have taken photographs have responded to this fact: how they have photographed American space. To make things as simple as possible I decided to concentrate on images of flat emptiness, avoiding mountainous areas where the contour lines jostle against each other. People, towns and buildings are also excluded, but I figured it was reasonable to include the Road, which is a metonym of the space it traverses. Plus or minus a few incidental details, I concerned myself exclusively with pictures comprising land and sky—and the route to the horizon where they meet.

Olson "spell[s] it large because it comes large here. Large, and without mercy." The most powerful image of this infinite mercilessness is also the first. In 1860, while employed as a photographer on a government survey, Humphrey Lloyd Hime made a view of "The Prairie Looking West" that serves as a template for our own survey. Half of the albumen silver print is a blank sky. The other half shows a flat and grassless prairie, gnawed clean by a recent plague of grasshoppers. Last year's exhibition at Tate Britain, *American Sublime*, revealed how American artists viewed their landscape through the conventions of European art. Hime's photo is the flat denial of such conventions. Taken within eight years of Flaubert's confessing his ambition "to write a book about nothing," it is a picture of next to nothing. Only two small details disturb the scorched-earth view of endless desolation: a parched white bone and, slightly nearer the camera, a human skull. As Martha Sandweiss notes in her recent book *Print the Legend: Photography and the American West*, "no one had ever provided such a vivid and horrific visual image of the terrifying emptiness that stretched across the North American prairies." As it happens, the picture was actually taken north of the political border, in Canada, but in the face of such vastness political boundaries are irrelevant.

After Hime there is a huge emptiness in the history of American photographs of emptiness. Emptiness was beyond the varied remits of the pictorialists, the Photo-Secessionists and the West Coast circle loosely associated with Edward Weston and Ansel Adams. We get a negative imprint of this in a letter written by Paul Strand in the course of a cross-country tour undertaken in 1915. Texas was interesting, he decided. "The country is flat. But the way the monotonous plain is broken by shacks and little houses is fascinating. Things become interesting as soon as the human element enters in." But it is exactly the inhuman, unbroken monotony that we are concerned with here.

It is not until the mid-1930s that we get a chance to re-view the outlook pioneered by Hime. The connection is made as explicit as possible by Arthur Rothstein's famous picture of a bleached steer's skull that he found (and then moved for more dramatic effect) on the badlands of South Dakota in 1936. By then America was in the grip of an economic depression so severe that it seemed to generate a meteorological catastrophe of near-biblical proportions to go with it: the Dust Bowl. Photographers documenting this bleakly resilient period of American history for the Farm Security Administration were concerned, like Strand, with "the human element"—even when there were no humans around.

In 1938, Dorothea Lange, an explicitly "concerned" photographer, took a picture of "The Road West, New Mexico." It is a view similar to Hime's—with the crucial "human" addition of the road. The top third of the picture is a band of blank sky; the bottom two-thirds a barren landscape dominated by a highway pouring toward the horizon. Nothing is coming the other way. There's no turning back. All you can do is keep heading west. Distance swallows you up. The distinguishing feature of this road is that it has absolutely no distinguishing features. But, having said that—and knowing what we do of Lange and the Depression—this road features vividly in our sense of American history. One edition of Lange's work emphasizes the point by placing it next to a quotation from one of the people she met on the road: "Do you reckon I'd be out on the highway if I had it good at home?" As originally published in *An American Exodus* (1939) the picture was paired with one of a family of homeless tenant farmers, taking to a similar road like refugees. In this context, to put it in cinematic terms, "The Road West" is like their "point of view" shot.

Lange shared this point of view to the extent that she got out of her car to take the picture. Since there is no sign of a car and no hint of movement, she might as well be on foot. This emphasizes the scale of the trek that lies ahead. You could stand here for hours waiting for a car to come by and then stand for another two hours after it's passed, waiting for another, hoping this time it will stop.

Lange's picture is of the long road to some kind of economic salvation. Its colossal emptiness could be a sign of infinite promise, but it also suggests a chronic scarcity of resources, an undeviating absence that will persist to the horizon or the grave. Because we know that Lange was a photographer dedicated to depicting the lives of migrants, Okies and sharecroppers, we know—even though, strictly speaking, we cannot know it from the picture—that the road ahead is not an expression of her journey but of the road taken by those whose lives she was documenting.

The contrast with a strikingly similar picture taken by Robert Frank in the course of a Guggenheim-funded trip through America in 1955–56 could hardly be greater. Like Lange's, Frank's photo—also taken in New Mexico, of Highway 285—shows a road heading to the horizon. The scene is scarcely less desolate than Lange's, but it has a different kind of sadness: the sadness of the night, the Kerouac sadness that stands for the promise and romance of new adventures and, in Frank's case, new photographs. In keeping with this, the greased-white sheen on the road imparts a feeling of motion, movement. I assume Frank, like Lange, was standing when he took it, but the picture is touched by the idea of mobility, of speed. Lange's is about distance, remoteness; Frank's is about covering ground. What was a symbol of the harsh reality of economic necessity is here the begetter of artistic possibilities and imminent encounters. Just what these encounters will be is anybody's guess. There is no telling, as we turn the pages of Frank's book *The Americans* (1958), where this road

Geoff Dyer is the author, most recently, of Yoga for People Who Can't Be Bothered to Do It.

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might lead. Lange documented a desperate search for work; here the search is not for work but for works of art, for images. The tacit subject of the photographs has become the photographer's own vision and journey. This road is thus a picture of Frank's trip or at least one segment of it. Lange's families of migrants have been replaced by the photographer's own family, an impression confirmed by the book's closing sequence of pictures of Frank's wife and their two children at a truck stop in Texas.

So, these two strikingly similar photos—photos of almost nothing—express clearly what John Szarkowski would later describe as a movement from documentary photography "in the service of a social cause... towards more personal ends."

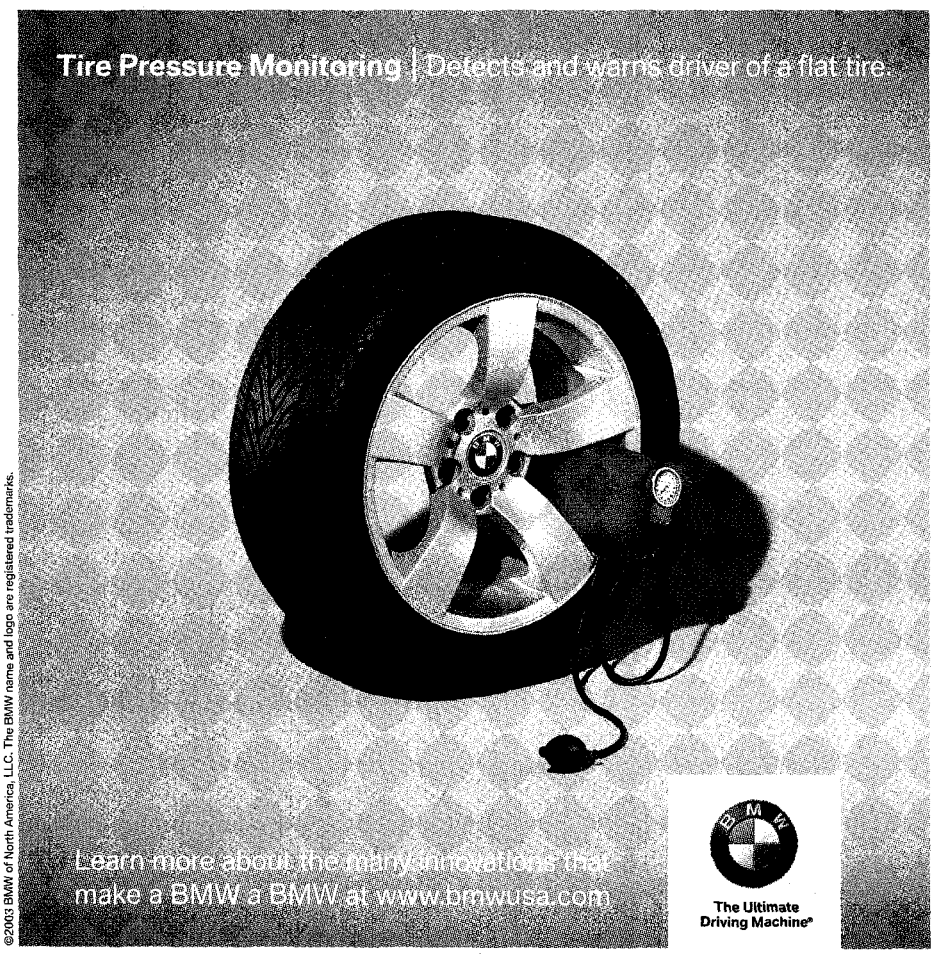
Despite the enthusiastic support of Walker Evans, the pre-eminent photographer of the earlier generation, Frank's perceived indifference to traditional ideas of visual composition was so challenging that at first he could not find a US publisher for the book. In the course of his Guggenheim-funded romp through America in 1964, Garry Winogrand pushed things a stage further, combining Frank's ad hoc aesthetic with a pictorial appetite so voracious it bordered on indiscriminate. In Frank's pictures motion is implied; Winogrand's are taken on the move, from the left-hand seat, while he's actually driving, thereby enhancing the feeling of the snatched moment, of near-randomness. The car becomes a self-contained little ecosystem, quite literally a worldview. On several occasions Frank photographs from his car—through the open side windows, say—but never through the windshield. For Winogrand the hood of the car and the streaks and smudges on the windshield become part of the picture; the dark interior roof of the car and the dashboard create a frame within the frame. The windshield becomes, in effect, a screen onto which the ongoing glimpses of life on the road are flickeringly projected.

Several shots are similar to Frank's and Lange's pictures of the open road, but the vastness is rendered manageable by the interior framing of the car. The knowledge that we are behind the wheel shrinks the distance, renders it familiar—homely even. This is brought out in another of these land-sky-and-highway pictures, taken "Near El Paso," of a home being towed along the highway—not a mobile home as such but a home that is temporarily mobile. In another picture, taken "Near Dallas," an interminable freight train is on a bridge crossing the highway, extending from one side of the picture frame to the other. The distant horizon has been blotted out: instead of a destination there is simply another means of transport.

So: Lange takes a picture of the open road; Frank takes an almost identical picture at night; Winogrand takes several through the windshield of his car... Then we come to Michael Ormerod, who peers at the road through a rain-spotted windshield in twilight. A white truck, lights blurring through the rain, is coming the other way. A gray sag of cloud weighs down on everything. At any moment the wipers are going to either clear the picture or smear it across the windshield. I looked back though *The Americans* to see if any of Frank's pictures are as blurred and dimly focused. No, they aren't; nor are any of Winogrand's as far gone as this. A basic drive in the development of all arts is to advance formally, the corollary of which is the Flaubertian urge to do away with content, to get to the point where "the subject would be almost invisible." Of course, this is a far more radical step in the visual arts than in literature. Ormerod simultaneously indicates his debt to Frank and Winogrand, and, as we say in Britain, overtakes them.

Despite the Scottish weather (clouds, wind, rain), the scene could not be mistaken for Britain; even with the clouds bearing down like this it couldn't be a road on our little island. There's none of that awful hemmed-in-ness, none of the oppressive sense of being, as D.H. Lawrence so perfectly expressed it, in a country the size of someone's backyard. Like Lawrence, Ormerod was born in gloomy England, in 1947, and died young (in a car accident in Arizona). Like Lawrence (and unlike Cartier-Bresson, who felt America was "too vast to photograph"), he basked in the geographical expansiveness of the United States.

This endless space is still being explored by contemporary photographers. Here I want to mention just two, both of whom work in color. Peter Brown has spent years photographing the Central Plains of America, which he first passed through with his parents at 13. Many of the photographs in *On the Plains* (1999) show simple bands of earth and sky, but what in Hime had been foreboding has here become gentle, beautiful, soothing. A picture of a "Dirt road and sky, west of Mullinsville, Kansas, 1991," shows the road yawning toward the horizon, as familiar and inviting as an English country lane. In another, of a "Plowed field, west of Levelland, Texas, 1992," the furrows—reminiscent of those photographed by Atget near Limoges—express unending fertility. Rather than an expanse of land divided by a road, the per-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spectival recession of the furrows turns the land itself into a road—a Zen road, if you will, one there is no point taking because wherever you are it will always be the same. Geophysicists say that space is what stops everything being in the same place. In Brown, space is the place.

The Great Plains used to be known as the Great American Desert. Farther west, Richard Misrach has devoted himself to an ongoing visual compendium of "desertness," or the "idea" of the desert. As in Hime's photo, the emptiness is marked and marred by a few tiny details: unexploded ordnance on the Bravo-20 Bombing Range in Nevada, for example. On other occasions nothing detracts from the silent immensity of sky and land. In a picture of the Black Rock Desert (1989), the sunbaked playa is crisscrossed by tire tracks, traces, presumably, of an event or happening. It is like a representation of a mechanically driven version of aboriginal songlines, an imprint of desert dream-time in which there is no distinction between what has occurred and what is still to come. The tracks go in all directions: The vanishing point we have observed in many of the photos in the course of this journey could lie in any number of directions. Everywhere is nowhere. ■

Untimely Meditations

EDWARD W. SAID

LATE BEETHOVEN: Music, Thought, Imagination. By Maynard Solomon. California. 327 pp. $29.95.

BEETHOVEN'S NINTH: A Political History. By Esteban Buch. Chicago. 327 pp. $27.50.

BEETHOVEN: The Music and the Life. By Lewis Lockwood. Norton. 604 pp. $39.95.

Beethoven has been particularly fortunate in his recent critics and biographers. As a start, Elliot Forbes's revised edition of Alexander Thayer's standard early-twentieth-century five-volume *Life* appeared to great acclaim in 1964 and was further revised by Forbes in 1967. This was followed by a spate of biographical and critical studies of a very high order, including works by Joseph Kerman, Scott Burnham, Charles Rosen, William Kinderman, Martin Cooper and Lewis Lockwood, the senior figure in Beethoven studies, whose magisterial *Beethoven: The Music and the Life*, the culmination of years of monographic studies, has also just appeared. But for sheer interpretive genius and an uncommon gift for rendering in prose the complex, humanly compelling subtleties of Beethoven's music and life, few approach Maynard Solomon. Aside from an excellent critical biography of Mozart and some important work on Schubert, Solomon has over the years focused his scholarly energies almost entirely on Beethoven, producing over the past quarter-century three massive (but eminently readable) volumes on the great composer: a biography (1977, revised in 1998), a collection, *Beethoven Essays* (1988), and now perhaps the most remarkable, *Late Beethoven*, which is also a collection unified around the composer's musical and spiritual concerns during the last decade of his life (1816–27).

Edward W. Said is the author, with Daniel Barenboim, of Parallels and Paradoxes *(Pantheon).*

Before describing Solomon's book let me say something about late style, which has been a great interest of mine for some years. There is first of all the artist's connection to his or her own time, or historical period, society and antecedents, how the aesthetic work, for all its irreducible individuality, is nevertheless a part—or, paradoxically, not a part—of the era in which it was produced. This is not simply a matter of sociological or political synchrony but more interestingly has to do with rhetorical or formal style. Thus Mozart expresses in his music a style much more intimately related to the worlds of court and church than Beethoven or Wagner, both of whom emerge from a secular environment in which, by virtue of unreliable patronage and the romantic cult of individual creativity, the composer is no longer seen as a servant (like Bach or Mozart) but as a demanding genius who stands proudly, and perhaps even narcissistically, apart from his time. So not only can one often see an easily perceptible connection between, say, a realistic artist like Balzac and his social milieu; there is also an antithetical relationship in the case of artists whose work challenges the aesthetic and social norms of their eras and is, so to speak, too late for the times, in the sense of superseding or transcending them. This relationship is especially difficult to discern in the case of a musician like Beethoven or Brahms, whose art is neither mimetic nor theatrical.

Beethoven's late works, according to Solomon, exude a new sense of private striving and instability that is quite different from earlier works such as the "Eroica" Symphony and the five piano concertos that address the world with self-confident gregariousness. The masterpieces of Beethoven's final decade are late to the extent that they are beyond their own time, ahead of it in terms of daring and startling newness, later than it in that they describe a return or homecoming to realms forgotten or left behind by the relentless forward march of history.

Literary modernism itself can be seen as a late-style phenomenon insofar as artists such as Joyce and Eliot appear to be out of their time altogether, returning to ancient myth or antique forms such as the epic or ancient religious ritual for their inspiration. Among other figures, writers like Lampedusa, the Sicilian aristocrat who wrote only one, backward-looking novel, *The Leopard*, which interested no publishers at all while he was alive, or Constantine Cavafy, the Alexandrian Greek poet who also published next to nothing during his lifetime, suggest the rarefied, almost precious, but formidably difficult aesthetic of minds that refuse direct engagement with their own time while spinning out a semi-resistant, backward-looking artwork of considerable power nonetheless. In philosophy, Nietzsche is the great prototype of a similarly "untimely" stance. The words "late" or "belated" seem acutely appropriate for such figures.

The second, more problematic aspect of late style on which Solomon draws has a special pertinence to Beethoven, whose late works (notably the Ninth Symphony, the last five piano sonatas, the final handful of quartets, *Missa Solemnis*) form an identifiable group and show marked evidence of a considerable transformation in his actual compositional style from the romantic heroism of his middle-period works to a difficult, highly personal and (to the listener and even his contemporaries) a somewhat unattractive, not to say repellent, idiom. It is as if the earlier extrovert has turned inward, and now produces gnarled and eccentric pieces of music that make unprecedented demands on performer and listener alike, and at the same time convey a sense not of resignation but of an unusual rebelliousness, breaking barriers, transgressively exploring the basic elements of the art as if anew.

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In an introduction he wrote for Rachel Bespaloff's *On the Iliad*, Hermann Broch, the distinguished Austrian man of letters and author of *The Sleepwalkers* and *The Death of Virgil*, speaks of what he calls the style of old age as follows:

> [It] is not always a product of the years; it is a gift implanted along with his other gifts in the artist, ripening, it may be, with time, often blossoming before its season under the foreshadow of death, or unfolding of itself even before the approach of age or death: it is the reaching of a new level of expression, such as the old Titian's discovery of the all-penetrating light which dissolves the human flesh and the human soul to a higher unity; or such as the finding by Rembrandt and Goya, both at the height of their manhood, of the metaphysical surface which underlies the visible in man and thing, and which nevertheless can be painted; or such as the *Art of the Fugue* which Bach in his old age dictated without having a concrete instrument in mind, because what he had to express was either beneath or beyond the audible surface of music.

Theodor Adorno's severely rigorous short essay "Beethoven's Late Style" catches the gist of this style aphoristically in one of the chapters of his posthumously published and unfinished book on the composer, *Beethoven: The Philosophy of Music*. What characterizes the late style, Adorno writes in this early part of the book, is not Beethoven's biographical apprehension of death (which, if it appears at all, does so only in the figure of allegory) but rather a new aesthetic that is fragmentary, incomplete, elusive and surprisingly full of outworn conventions (trills, *fiorituras*, "ingenuously simple...accompaniments") that are "made visible in unconcealed, untransformed barrenness." Far from the ripeness of a mature fruit, this peculiar style and the late works it gives rise to "are not well rounded, but wrinkled, even fissured. They are apt to lack sweetness, fending off with prickly tartness those interested merely in sampling them." Adorno concludes with this bravura set of formulations:

> The caesurae, however, the abrupt stops which characterize the latest Beethoven more than any other feature, are those moments of breaking free; the work falls silent as it is deserted, turning its hollowness outward. Only then is the next fragment added, ordered to its place by escaping subjectivity and colluding for better or worse with what has gone before, and can be exorcized only by the figure they form together. This illuminates the contradiction whereby the very late Beethoven is called both subjective and objective, while the light in which alone it glows is subjective. He does not bring about their harmonious synthesis. As a dissociative force he tears them apart in time, perhaps in order to preserve them for the eternal. In the history of art, late works are the catastrophes.

This may seem impossibly gnomic, and it is certainly complicated to decipher, but its main arguments are clear enough. First of all, late-style Beethoven is not, as one might expect, all about reconciliation and a kind of restful summing up of a long, productive career. That is what one finds, for example, in Shakespeare's late romances like *The Tempest*, *The Winter's Tale* and *Cymbeline*, or in Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus*, where, to borrow from another context, ripeness is all. In Adorno's account of late style, there is violence, experimental energy and, most important, a refusal to accept any idea of a healing, inclusive restfulness that comes at the end of a fruitful career. Second, and this is crucial for Solomon's book (which, oddly, mentions Adorno only in passing), the late-style phenomenon overturns our ideas and experiences about the coherence, organic completeness, the wholeness of the work, which is tied together (if that's the right way of putting it) in unexpected ways. Solomon shows, for example, that for a long time after Beethoven composed the choral finale to the Ninth Symphony, he was endlessly toying with the idea of replacing it with instrumental music and doing away entirely with the choral setting of Schiller's "Ode to Joy." And what we have now, Solomon continues, is hardly the unitary hymn to joy but rather a composition whose "fusion of styles and procedures is matched by the multivalence of its forms, which constitute a palimpsest of superimposed hybrid structures—a set of variations; one or another sonata form; a four-movement cycle superimposed on a sonata-allegro concerto form with double exposition...; a cantata; a through-composed text-derived form; a suite; a divertimento; an operatic finale; and even a free fantasy." Everything about the work echoes "resistance to the given. That is why it begins with open fifths, tonal indeterminacy, a sense of the void."

Solomon's description of the late work's openness explains somewhat the Ninth's various cultural appropriations since its first Vienna performance in 1824. This amazingly persistent phenomenon has been studied with sociological rigor by Esteban Buch in *Beethoven's Ninth: A Political History*, which demonstrates how Beethoven's music played a major part in the formation of national identity (along with national anthems like "God Save the King" and "La Marseillaise"). The Ninth ended up tragically in the employ of twentieth-century German nationalism at its worst, but it also lent itself to the struggles against apartheid and totalitarianism. No other musical work has had as far-reaching political effect all over the world as the Ninth, especially its celebration of human fraternity and an empowering freedom.

Solomon's focus, however, is exclusively on the composer's own internal world, which, beginning in the years around 1810 and "gaining momentum as the decade proceeded...eventually amounted to a sweeping realignment of his understanding of nature, divinity, and human purpose, constituting a sea change in Beethoven's system of beliefs." Using the composer's prose jottings in his *Tagebuch*, an intimate diary kept between 1812 and 1818, Solomon tries to do nothing less than connect these quite explicitly verbal and often philosophical thoughts to the entirely musical, nondiscursive, nondenotative world of tones and abstract form.

In a series of twelve chapters and a prologue, Solomon sketches out the revolution in thought, feeling and musical form that Beethoven accomplished during his last years as an active composer. These were years of increasing deafness and solitude, of political disillusionment (especially after the Congress of Vienna) and a heightened sense of his own mortality. During this period he withdrew into himself, seeking through intense concentration to come to terms with his art not in an adversarial but in a creatively cooperative way, at the same time that he felt he had to renounce urban life for "the quasi-monastic solitude of rural life, removed from the hurly-burly of the city." What might have become instead an unforgiving sacrificial imperative was tempered by Beethoven's unstilled need for human kinship: Solomon opines that that need accounts for the lonely bachelor's efforts to become his nephew's guardian and mentor. But this too became for Beethoven "another form of self-denial," while musically he worked out "possible reconfigurations of musical form...[in order] to sound unplumbed depths of expressivity."

Read this way, Beethoven's last compositions, his late style, undertake all sorts of unconventional excursions in content and form, from a leisurely pastoral setting in his last violin sonata, Opus 96, which moves toward "a restoration of the full range of classical pastoral experience that Virgil, Bion, and Theocritus had known, including its Elegiac and Bacchic strains, thereby rescuing musical pastoral from its ongoing slide into a picturesque,

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devitalized celebration of the bucolic," to a "devotional journey in his [monumental piano work, the] 'Diabelli' Variations," and then finally to "a colossal symphony that presumed to dissolve boundaries between language and music, thus perhaps to restore the union of the arts rumored to have existed in ancient ritual drama." Many of these ideas are scattered in Beethoven's notebooks, letters and diaries of the period, but it is Solomon's ingenuity to have seen in that often inchoate and fragmentary material the adumbration of huge formal outlines that, in their philosophical challenge to students of Beethoven, go well beyond the fussy schematic formalism imposed traditionally on orthodox musicology.

To Solomon, it is clear that besides being a great artist, Beethoven is also a thinker, and what he does in music is to think, feel and survey new territory in order to produce sound that almost has the feel of a landscape, or that of a Dantesque voyage, all of it realized in an exactingly personal, even rebarbative musical language. Thus, the older Beethoven abandons an anthropocentric classical worldview inherited from the Enlightenment and, like the literary and philosophic Romantics who were his contemporaries, he returns again and again to a transfigured or renovated classical world, even to the point of adapting classical Greek meters to organize his great Seventh Symphony in an attempt to "evoke the ancient pagan world via a fantasy reconstruction of its music." This, says Solomon, is a Classic-Romantic revalidation of "the cultural, ethical, and aesthetic premises of Antiquity." It is also, we need to add, yet another instance of what E.M. Butler has called the tyranny of Greece over Germany.

If one major intellectual source for Beethoven's late style was the body of ideas and readings he shared with Schlegel, Goethe and Herder—much of it derived from romantic Orientalism, especially that branch of it concerned with ancient mystery cults and religions from the East and the Mediterranean, translations of the ancient Indian classics by William Jones, and of course a renewed interest in Homer and other antique authors—the other was the Masonic tradition, which was extraordinarily influential in early modern Europe. Mozart was a prominent Mason, and so too in much of his thought about ritual purification, initiatory trials of endurance and moral fortitude, a deep veneration of the highest humanistic Illuminist ideals (all of this memorably embodied in Mozart's *Sarastro*), was Beethoven. A fine chapter by Solomon on Beethoven's "Masonic Imagination" goes over this material with great sensitivity, since as with all other fields of endeavor, Beethoven was a vital, if also eccentric, solitary whose prodigious hallmark was to cannibalize everything he borrowed or read and make it his own. Solomon's method is to show the trends and the inflections that enter the music as music, rather than as programmatic ideas.

The range of material in this book is striking indeed. Solomon moves gracefully between literature, philosophy, literary theory, social history, musical analysis and informed intellectual speculation. What is so impressive about the writing is the extraordinary tact and precision of Solomon's prose, as he describes music— the most silent and enigmatic of the arts—in terms that relate both to the whole range of one of the most striking of human minds in its historical context while also allowing us to enter the music on its own formal and compositional terms. In analyzing, for example, Beethoven's "Diabelli" Variations, a complex late-style piano composition consisting of thirty-three variations on what has been usually considered to be a trivial waltz theme by Anton Diabelli, Solomon revises and overturns that conventional assumption by relating the tune instead to Wordsworth's concern with the "humble and rustic," and the romantic "valorization of folk art"; which in turn leads us to "the familiar

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[which] opens on the quotidian, the sphere of the quotidian itself opens, not only on the humble, the popular, the rustic, and every manifestation of the ordinary, but on larger issues of identity as well." From there, Solomon proceeds to an elegant account of the huge work as a journey, the many skillfully executed metamorphoses in it implying a narrator who "looks back to the theme, which is the link to the home that he left in favor of an arduous pursuit of every conceivable metaphor for a desired goal—toward God, Paradise, reason, wisdom, order, peace, achievement, perfection, healing, and love." And then, in a masterful turn of phrase, Solomon notes how Beethoven foils our expectations of arrival and chooses instead "to close with a wordless song, a spectral dance in tempo di minuetto, moderato, marked *grazioso e dolce*."

I wish there were more opportunity here to show how every chapter in Solomon's book is full of subtle, deeply satisfying accounts of what actually went into Beethoven's late-style works, but of course there isn't. Still, I can conclude here by suggesting the compelling nature of Solomon's achievement, which seems to me to provide a kind of humanistic inquiry on the highest level without ever scanting the technical demands of Beethoven's formidably complex music. How many musicologists today can, for instance, excavate the Romantic movement as thoroughly as Solomon does and then take from it its principal motifs and images as they are transformed by Beethoven according to the rigors of, say, a symphony, sonata, fugue or bagatelle?

What distinguishes so much of Solomon's work is his fearless way of connecting human concerns of the utmost importance with the exigencies of music: Thus a moving chapter on the use of music for healing purposes derives its power from reported actual performances by Beethoven and Schubert (his exact contemporary) of specific piano works, in whose sonic universe the composer placed a kind of therapeutic spell. Or, even more brilliant than that, there is a superb excursion on Beethoven's endings during his last period (for example, for transcendental works such as the Hammerklavier Sonata and the Ninth Symphony), which are shown to be far from the conclusive and triumphant cadences that we have all taken them for, but rather seen by Beethoven as alternatives among others for closing statements to these monuments in sound. Far from being airy speculations, Solomon's analyses rely on the archeological discipline of archival research, which he turns into evidence for what he unwaveringly regards as Beethoven's endless, unrelenting artistic vitality and creativity. "Ultimately, the coercive and subversive implications of [such works as] the Ninth Symphony may be inseparable, perhaps because Beethoven's futuristic impulse—to create things that had never before existed—warred with his yearning to belong to tradition."

My one nagging reservation about what Solomon does so well as an inventive critic and generously sympathetic cultural interpreter is that it isn't clear how his findings might be related to actual performances of Beethoven's music today. You can take Solomon's marvelously enlightening insights out of Beethoven's writing and his scores, but he does not quite provide us with a way of putting them back into musical realizations of the works themselves. Perhaps there is no direct indication of how that might be done, although, if the reader is a musician, he or she is filled with a sense of possible interpretive routes to take. Performance necessarily involves choices made and action taken. Solomon's reticence on this point somewhat undermines the attractive power of his overall insights, with their richness of allusion and the sense they convey of untapped possibility and as-yet-unthought alternatives buried inside the music, there to be discovered and deciphered with great intellectual pleasure. Perhaps that's enough of an achievement for one critic writing at the top of his form, but I must say that I feel tantalizingly close to an understanding of what I might do as a musician with Solomon there to guide me, along with the legions of performing artists who have so much to learn from his analyses. If only now he would. ■

The Mess in Mesopotamia

ANDREW COCKBURN

THE NEW IRAQ. By Joseph Braude. Basic. 211 pp. $26.

Not long before the bombs and missiles began to rain on Baghdad, three men from the Iraqi opposition in exile were summoned to the Oval Office to meet their putative liberator. As they later explained to friends and associates, they found the experience a little unnerving in view of President Bush's ignorance about the country he was preparing to invade. He was intrigued, for example, to learn that Iraqi Muslims are divided between two branches of Islam, Shiite and Sunni. The rest of us have come to expect such vacuity, but in fact most Americans are not that far ahead of the chief executive in general knowledge about Iraq. Hence Joseph Braude's little book, *The New Iraq*, could fill a useful function, given its plentiful supply of interesting facts and observation on what is now our colony. Where else, for example, are we likely to learn that the Iraqis commissioned Frank Lloyd Wright in 1957 to build Baghdad's first opera house (the job was canceled after a coup), that the early Mesopotamian ruler Sargon of Akkad started life as a landscape gardener, or that the hit series on Iraqi TV in the 1990s was *Wolves of the Night*, the saga of a Baghdad gang in which the individual members were portrayed as "ordinary people responding to extraordinary hardship by doing what they must to get by."

Close examination of his text indicates that Braude, despite frequent travels to the region as a management consultant, has apparently never actually been to Baghdad, a fact he artfully elides. Nevertheless, his diligent offshore researches have yielded a portrait of the country as it existed before George Bush began liberating it that is a lot more interesting than reports at the time from most Baghdad-based correspondents.

Early on, Braude quotes Edward Said to the effect that Americans "are profoundly unaware of the society that has persisted beneath Saddam's vast shadow." Like Saddam himself, the outside world persisted in casting all of Iraqi society as a reflection of the dictator, ignoring the degree to which he had failed to stamp it into conformity. Followers of the revered Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani outside Iraq e-mailed their requests for guidance to Iran, whence they were smuggled across the frontier to Najaf for consideration by the Shiite sage, whose answers were smuggled out again to the nearest point where they could be translated onto the Internet. In Basra, meanwhile, there flourished a snake charmer who made magical ointments and potions out of venom—a vestige of an ancient Mesopotamian cult.

No less pertinently, Braude points out that the Iraq that evolved under the priva-

Andrew Cockburn, a longtime Middle East correspondent, is co-author of Out of the Ashes: The Resurrection of Saddam Hussein *(Perennial).*

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tions of the 1990s was not "the Iraq that émigrés from the 1960s, and 1970s remember...a country enriched with oil and legitimate business and employment opportunities for most of its citizens." Sanctions-era Iraq was a country of 600,000 war widows, many of whom joined the stream of prostitutes that emerged as one of Iraq's principal exports in this period. It was also the land of "the cats of the embargo," as the local profiteers who fattened on the cruel economics of the UN blockade were known.

Braude's apparent sensitivity to the impact of the embargo on Iraqi society is all the more curious given his respect for various hawks who not only supported the sanctions policy but actively campaigned for the catastrophe of the US invasion and occupation. *New Republic* publisher Martin Peretz, for example, a fanatical Zionist who never met a cruise missile aimed at an Iraqi he didn't like, is fawningly eulogized in the acknowledgments for "his prescient comments and advice...a source of constant strength."

Professor Bernard Lewis of Princeton, even in his dotage a malign inspiration for the likes of Paul Wolfowitz and Richard Perle, gets a kiss on the hand for helping the author "formulate new hopes for the future of the Middle East through the prism of its rich history, literature and cultures."

Recent events in Baghdad have of course insured that the prism of Iraqi history, literature and culture has suddenly become a lot less rich, thanks to the destruction of the national museum, library and archives under the invaders' indifferent gaze. So much of the Iraq described in this book has been swept away in recent months that it seemingly belongs to another age, not least because of the author's breezy prescriptions for the country's reconstruction. The army? Let it be the "university of the nation," promoting "normative frameworks...needed in the new Iraq, including the values of pluralism and entrepreneurship." The economy? Let Iraq have a free-trade agreement with the United States in the same manner as Jordan; foster a class of technocrats by training young people to prosecute software counterfeiters. Privatize everything.

This is all reminiscent of an editorial in *The Economist* (former owner of Braude's employer, Pyramid Research)—confident, flippant and mostly irrelevant. Doubtless the reason Braude is popular with the likes of Lewis and Peretz is that they, even more than he, had little idea of what an invasion of Iraq would actually mean both for its inhabitants and the invaders. So far as one can tell, the neocon faction that fomented this war actually believed their own propaganda. At the end of last year Professor Lewis's eager pupil Paul Wolfowitz, for example,

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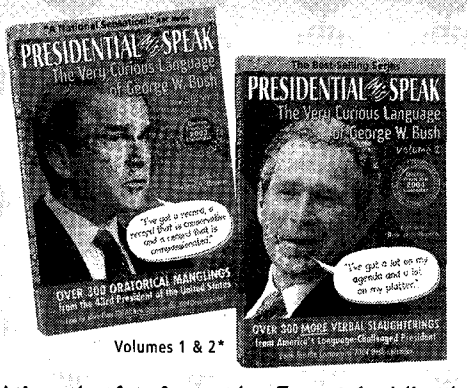
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actually stated that Iraqis would welcome Americans to Baghdad as the French had welcomed liberators in Paris in 1944. He also apparently believed that Ahmad Chalabi, leader of the Iraqi National Congress and deeply unpopular inside Iraq, would be the Iraqi de Gaulle. Given the many Chalabi-associated names littering Braude's long list of acknowledgments, the author spent time in the same fantasy land—"There is every expectation that...waves of surrender will greet American troops and their allies in a 2003 confrontation."

Today, the ugly reality is plain for all to see. Cholera is spreading in the cities, and what may have escaped in the looting of the Iraqi equivalent of the Centers for Disease Control does not bear thinking about. Electricity has still not been properly restored; the last rations distributed by Saddam's government are running out. The occupiers' casualty lists are lengthening. Apart from the eviction of Chalabi from the sumptuous quarters he had appropriated in Baghdad, there is no good news.

A distraught Iraqi friend wrote to me recently, reflecting that "there is a saying in Iraq equivalent to the saying 'What's the use of closing the barn door after the horse has gone,' which says 'What is the use, now that Basra is in ruins?' But Basra *is* in ruins." It sounds as if Basrans, like other Iraqis, will be rejecting advice from anyone who took part in the ruining. ■

FILMS

Urban Legend

STUART KLAWANS

AMERICAN SPLENDOR

Here's our man, starring in a movie about himself. Notice the clumping, simian gait; the aggrieved set of the lower jaw; the habit of rubbing the back of the skull, either to quiet a nagging idea or else, more likely, nudge it into more aggressive life. Alone, eyes downcast, our man strides in medium shot and long shot through the cold Cleveland streets. He no longer needs to look at these surroundings; he knows them so well that he can watch them anytime on his eyelids' screen. Rarely, though, is the screen of American cinema touched by anything like these rows of brown brick apartment buildings, all breathing their perpetual cabbage steam; the plots of frozen weeds, carefully secured behind chain link; the factory yards, empty in the afternoon light of winter, or maybe just empty nowadays; the long prospect, around the corner of a one-story commercial block, up the level street toward Canada. Similar views of the real Detroit figured in Curtis Hanson's *8 Mile*; the authentic Omaha has been a player in Alexander Payne's movies. Few similar examples come to mind from recent cinema, though, and none where the city and its son are fused so thoroughly to the hard bop tenor of Joe Maneri's "Paniots Nine."

Anyone with ears can understand how Maneri's music fits the scene. His sound is biting, asymmetrical, lyrical, propulsive and right. But you have to be like our man himself—a scholar of the bypassed, an arguer out of the obscure, for the obscure—to know that Maneri recorded this cut in 1963 and then waited thirty-five years for its release. In fact it was our man, Harvey Pekar, who in his role as a jazz critic helped bring this music out of absolute darkness, into the penumbral repute it now enjoys.

Speaking of penumbral repute: From off the streets of Cleveland comes the movie about Harvey Pekar—the man who has shown how great it is, and how frustrating, to remain on the streets of Cleveland. From off the streets of Cleveland (as he says in his comic books) comes *American Splendor*.

In equal measures a biopic, a drama and an elaboration of Pekaresque themes, the *American Splendor* movie will first of all satisfy those who (like me) have avidly followed the comic since it began appearing during the Ford Administration. Like the best of the Conceptual artists who flourished in those years (no doubt to our man's disgust), Pekar created something brilliantly new by using the old, Modernist trick of putting an object into an alien context. Duchamp, early in the century, had collaged a bicycle wheel onto a wooden stool, implicitly substituting these mundane things for a sculpture on a pedestal. On the same principle, Cindy Sherman in the mid-1970s began to collage her own image, in various get-ups, into film-still settings; and Pekar inserted his T-shirted, clumping, skull-rubbing self into that environment of superheroes, the comic book. (The gesture was all the more Conceptualist for requiring no traditional artistic skill. Pekar wrote the *American Splendor* stories and left the drawing to others, beginning with his old friend Robert Crumb.) Granted, earlier writers had created autobiographical comics—I think, for example, of Justin Green, with his *Binky Brown Meets the Holy Virgin Mary*—but they hadn't achieved Pekar's wonderfully bracing results. In *American Splendor*, reality looked more real than ever—grimier, odder, funnier, more melancholy—for having erupted inside a comic book.

In that sense, we fans don't even need to see the *American Splendor* movie to love it. Conceptually, it's enough for us to scan the cast list and see that the magnificent character of Mr. Boats has come to the screen—Mr. Boats, the righteous and gnomic head of file clerks at the VA hospital in Cleveland, where Pekar worked for virtually all his adult life (he retired in 2001). We're at last going to see that chubby, bow-tied figure in the flesh (here embodied by Earl Billings); we're going to listen to him hold forth against today's music—"Trash!"—while pounding his fist into his palm and ignoring all other lines of dialogue. A Möbius twist: In place of the real human figure we had intuited through the cartoon, we now have a fictional (though human) equivalent to the drawing.

But there's more, and better. Pekar's file-clerk buddy at the VA hospital, Toby Radloff, the drawling, bachelor prince of Cleveland's nerds, appears in the *American Splendor* movie in dual form, as both an actor (Judah Friedlander) and himself—sometimes within the same frame. And more: Pekar and his long-suffering, long-simmering wife, Joyce Brabner, come onto the screen in at least three incarnations, as actors (Paul Giamatti and Hope Davis), cartoon images and the real Joyce and Harvey.

The writer-director pair who have realized the movie, Shari Springer Berman and Robert Pulcini, understand that this multiplicity is part of both the appeal and the unstated meaning of *American Splendor* comics. Different artists draw Pekar, so his looks keep changing, even while his character remains true to its disgruntled, stuck-in-Cleveland self. Thematically, these variations help to convey Pekar's message that "Ordinary life is pretty complex stuff." Dramatically, they provide the movie's Joyce with an opportunity to comment nervously on Pekar's apparent mutability when she is about to meet him for the first time, having spent the previous months as his pen pal. At

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his invitation, Joyce has come to visit from Wilmington, Delaware, and is looking around the Amtrak station for her host. What to expect? Some artists, she thinks, make Harvey look like a young Brando (and there's an example of such a drawing, collaged into a shot of the waiting room). Others depict him as a hairy ape (another collage effect); and Crumb has these wavy lines coming off him, like a bad smell. "Those are motion lines," Harvey explains in voiceover. "I'm a fast-moving guy." Then he appears to Joyce in the flesh—that is, in Paul Giamatti's flesh—to hold out his hand and offer the world's all-time champion blind-date opener: "I want to make one thing clear up front. I've had a vasectomy."

Berman and Pulcini have found the heart of their movie in this first, impossibly funny meeting of Joyce and Harvey, and also in the later episode (which Joyce and Harvey turned into a comic book) of *Our Cancer Year*, when he was undergoing chemotherapy and she was keeping him going. You don't ordinarily think of delicacy and emotional nuance in scenes involving people who collapse before toilets (as they do in both these sections of the movie); but the interplay here between Joyce and Harvey is as touching as it is hilarious, thanks to the acute honesty of the movie's source material, the filmmakers' deadpan direction and (above all) the virtuosity of Giamatti and Davis. Both actors perform precise imitations of their real-life models (as you can see easily enough through on-screen comparisons), and both go far beyond mimicry, to suggest that beneath the surface of each lives a world of experience, much of it either disappointing or infuriating. As soon as Davis-Joyce and Giamatti-Harvey meet, you can see they were made for each other, God help them. They're so quick to read one another's minds, and often so bad at it, that the simple exercise of choosing a restaurant not only leads them to someplace they both loathe but compels them to stay there. Neither of them can laugh off the mistake and offer to leave; so you do the laughing for them. Later that same evening, when it turns out that Harvey had read something correctly in Joyce and cared enough about her to act on it, you're also moved for them.

These are the scenes I most admire, where Berman and Pulcini have been true to Pekar's comic and their own movie alike. Sometimes, though, they've made a choice, retaining their movieness at the expense of Pekar's peculiar achievement.

He did not just collage himself into comic books; he also collaged in the ordinary passage of time. The *locus classicus* of this effect: the uproarious one-page "story" titled "Standing Behind Old Jewish Ladies in Supermarket Lines." The point of this page (drawn by Crumb) was the very pointlessness of the time that Harvey was wasting, since he could do nothing, nothing at all, to speed the picayune transaction holding him up, or to alter the centuries-old culture of the co-religionist he wanted to strangle. Like so much of *American Splendor*, this page is a triumph of observation, which is achieved as if for its own sake, leading nowhere.

Berman and Pulcini recreated this scene in their movie—and against the spirit of the original, they turned it into a plot point. Harvey becomes exasperated, as the old Jewish lady kills his time; Harvey realizes his life is slipping away; Harvey goes home and writes the first stories of *American Splendor*. I hasten to say this moment plays just as well as the filmmakers intended; so do all the moments that have been added up into a narrative, with learning and growth and a big hug at the end. But playing well isn't necessarily Pekar's intent. As an artist, he resists the satisfying wrap-up, in a way that's closer to the filmmaking of Jim Jarmusch or Aki Kaurismaki, or for that matter the music of Joe Maneri, who is, tellingly, the only hard bopper on the soundtrack.

This isn't to say that Berman and Pulcini have betrayed Pekar, or made the kind of movie he would deride as Hollywood bullshit. But they've been more accommodating to convention than he would be, a bit more commercial—which is intriguing, since they also understand the hipster ethos to which Pekar is loyal.

They know it's not a cult of failure, though nonhipsters often misunderstand it as such; they show us that Pekar has in fact burned for success all his life. But he has demanded that it come to him; he will not change his clothes, floss his teeth and go out to meet success at a bar where chardonnay costs twelve bucks a glass. Give in to phoniness even that much, and the next thing you know you're making excuses for big corporations and feeling superior to guys like Toby Radloff. Of course, most people, including Toby himself, don't worry about such compromises; they would gladly take success on the world's terms. But Pekar is one of those hotheaded, old-fashioned people who won't give up their politics, their vinyl or their faded plaid shirts. They want to keep everything real—even in their comic books.

We've met some of these people in earlier movies: notably Terry Zwigoff's *Crumb* and *Ghost World*. Now, in the wretched summer of *The Hulk*, a new comic-book movie reintroduces us to them, just when we need it most.

Splendid. ■

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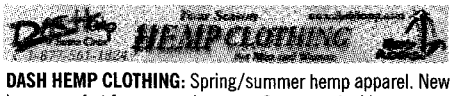

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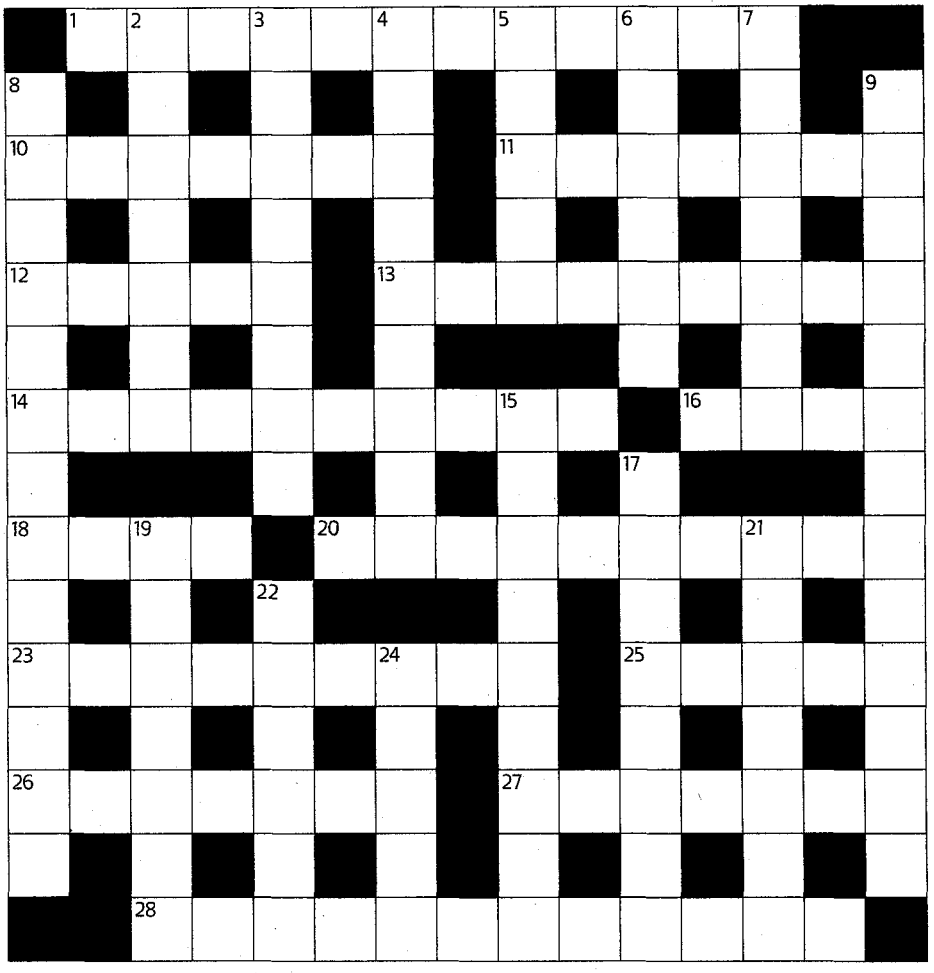

ACROSS

1 What people have to pass on their way to graduation ceremonies. (12)

10 What they hear coming from the Navy commander, now first, if I were next to last at warming-up places. (7)

11 The artist has something to put the kettle on, the beam being rather dim. (7)

12 A wild time had by many people, including Highlanders! (5)

13 Place air travelers once knew well, good for a quiet nap by candlelight. (9)

14 Near the former president, who winds up with this bird! (5,5)

16 Where the coin goes, when it might appear lost. (4)

18 The pejorative that makes blondes indignant, and rightly so—being unable to talk about it. (4)

20 You lose a lot of blood with such at the end of the dress, otherwise a well-known factor with advancing years. (10)

23 Does the one likely to take over have a failure?—quite the opposite, alternatively. (9)

25 Is the monk sick of the added non-necessity? (5)

26 The cut-up pie is finished, being an undistinguished imitator of an important person. (7)

27 Following the style of the Parthenon sculptor, being sort of "hip" to Diana's unfinished presentation. (7)

28 Do it Dutch treat and travel below the usual speed limit a couple of times. (2,5-5)

DOWN

2 It involves a deep look at you, with the unknown quantity getting a year's beginning in the prizefight business. (1-6)

3 With the way Germans say it, one gets an opening to moderate things. (8)

4 Part of your eyeglass frame is not the exact specie where one is unexpectedly found about it. (4-5)

5 One finds a lot of water at its being brought up with a garden tool. (5)

6 Goes around and around, alternatively small pieces do. (6)

7 This sort of place is unique. (7)

8 China like this could rub one the wrong way! (7,6)

9 What someone like Bluebeard's unwanted guest does at times, taking strolls with an important part of the platform. (5,3,5)

15 It deals with mountains, alternatively you get to go back to the wild Harpy this way. (9)

17 Some consider it the writing on the wall. (8)

19 What was the bird doing? Making fun of people? (7)

21 Its main trouble is that one is so concerned with soul! (7)

22 The way one might start to show what the disgusted viewer turns. (3,3)

24 Are ledgers likely to be found on one, possibly appearing in the flesh? (5)

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 2904

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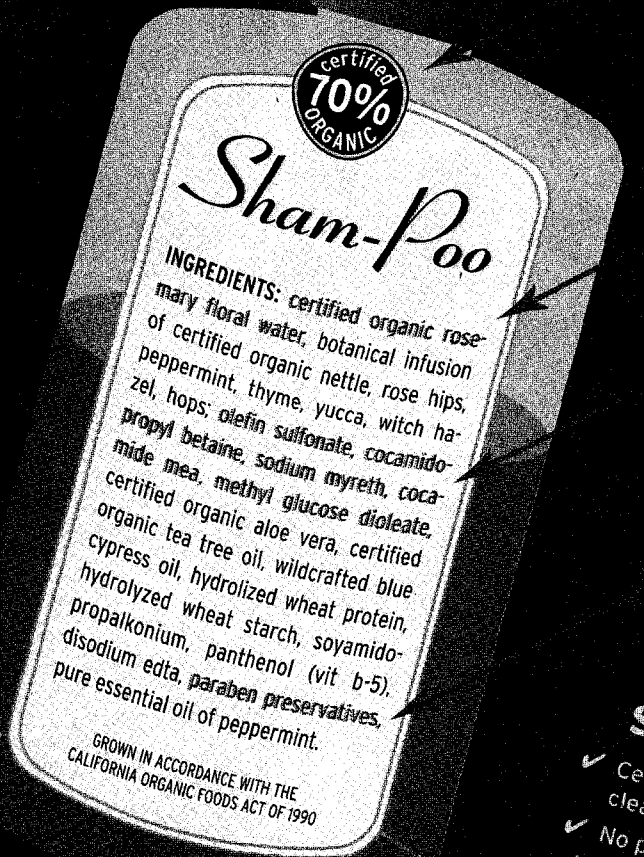
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

COMING CLEAN

Help Us Protect Organic Consumers from

LABEL FRAUD


certified 70% ORGANIC
Sham-Poo
INGREDIENTS: certified organic rosemary floral water, botanical infusion of certified organic nettle, rose hips, peppermint, thyme, yucca, witch hazel, hops; olefin sulfonate, cocamidopropyl betaine, sodium myreth, cocamide mea, methyl glucose dioleate, certified organic aloe vera, certified organic tea tree oil, wildcrafted blue cypress oil, hydrolized wheat protein, hydrolyzed wheat starch, soyamidopropalkonium, panthenol (vit b-5), disodium edta, paraben preservatives, pure essential oil of peppermint.
GROWN IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CALIFORNIA ORGANIC FOODS ACT OF 1990

IS YOUR SHAMPOO REALLY 70% ORGANIC?

Floral Water

Floral waters (or hydrosols) are the water by-product of essential oil distillation after all the essential oil has been removed, and are basically a complicated way of making tea. Companies mislead consumers by listing floral waters and botanical water extracts and infusions first, burying the synthetic surfactant ingredients that in fact make up the core of the product further down. The substantial amount of non-agricultural water (i.e. not coming from the plant itself) in "floral waters" is deceptively counted as "organic", which is forbidden under the National Organic Program. This scheme artificially inflates the organic content in order to make a deceptive "70% organic" claim.

Core Ingredients

The core ingredients include synthetic surfactants in part or wholly derived from petroleum, such as olefin sulfonate, cocamidopropyl betaine, sodium myreth sulfate, as well as paraben preservatives. Surfactants like Sodium Myreth Sulfate (and any other surfactant with "-eth" in its name) are ethoxylated with ethylene oxide from petroleum and contain traces of dioxin, a highly toxic carcinogenic substance.

Organic body care should mean:

- ✔ Certified organic materials only to make cleansing and conditioning ingredients
- ✔ No petroleum derivatives
- ✔ Simple and ecological manufacturing processes
- ✔ Non-agricultural water is not used to inflate the percentage of organic content

Join the Coming Clean Campaign and help the Organic Consumers Association stop unscrupulous body care industry reps from pressuring the USDA's National Organic Program and the Organic Trade Association into accepting these misleading practices in the national organic standards.

www.organicconsumers.org/bodycare

ORGANIC CONSUMERS ASSOCIATION

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